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ORDER NO. 11

"Drop that gun, Baird!"

Order No. 11

A TALE OF THE BORDER

By Caroline Abbot Stanley

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HARRY C. EDWARDS

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CLINTON, MO. February, 1969

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TO

MRS. JESSAMINE WALLACE,

OF JACKSON COUNTY, MISSOURI,

A PARTICIPANT IN THESE SCENES,

AND THE FAITHFUL FRIEND OF

THREE GENERATIONS,

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED

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ORDER NO. 11

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A TALE OF THE BORDER

CHAPTER I

THE MAN WITH THE SINGLE AIM

IT was a September day on the western prairies of Missouri. The earth had risen from a fresh bath like a strong man rejoicing to run a race. There was no trace of the summer's lassitude in field or flower, nor as yet a hint of failing powers in the forest beyond.

A young man of twenty and a girl in the exuberant beauty of form and coloring that belongs to seventeen sat together out in the summer-house and talked the fleeting hours away. And how fast they went! Gordon was going away soon—and the sun was almost down. They were very commonplace things they talked about; sometimes the conversation was fragmentary and disjointed; it would hardly have passed for conversation at all if they had been held to the strict letter of the law, for often there were long intervals in which neither cared to talk. But they were never awkward pauses; he was no stranger that must be entertained with ceaseless chatter. Sometimes the silences seemed the pleasantest part of their talk,—they were so instinct with communion. Yes, a very commonplace conversation; but to them, sparkling and deep-toned, for the coloring of seventeen and twenty was in it.

They were speaking now of an expected guest.

"When is she coming?" he asked.

"We don't know exactly. Father has gone to the office now to see if there is a letter. We think she will be here to-morrow. I hope she will—I 'm crazy to see her. And then she ought to have Sunday to rest. It is a long journey from Massachusetts to Missouri."

And it was longer in 1859 than it is to-day.

"She is from Boston, you say?"

"From near there. My! I dread it, as anxious as I am for her to come. I 'm afraid of anybody that knows so much!"

Virginia Trevilian gave a shrug to the pretty dimpled shoulders rising from the baby waist of pink lawn. "Gordon, they say she can teach Greek and Latin! Just think of that! A woman!"

Gordon Lay smiled. He had been in college three years now, and he was not so much in awe of Greek and Latin as he had once been.

The girl gave a bubbling laugh that was good to hear, it was so spontaneous. Somehow it made one think of the overflow of a never-failing spring.

"Aunt Nan says she fully expects them to get stalled coming out from the landing. She says all that wisdom is enough to mire the mules."

He laughed with her.

"It takes Miss Nannie to set things out! How will she get along with a Massachusetts Yankee? She is such a Virginian."

"Oh, they 'll get along all right if Miss Abby only has some sense of humor. If she has n't, she 'll have a hard time. Aunt Nan always sees the fun in things, but she 's good. She would n't hurt her feelings for the world. It 's mother that is worrying. She is so afraid Miss Abby won't eat hot waffles and things." And the spring bubbled over again.

The summer-house was covered with a wealth of coral honeysuckle that shut out the world and all it held. A winding graveled walk with a border of old-fashioned heart's-ease led from it to the white-pillared portico of the house beyond that Virginia Trevilian called home.

It was a stately structure for the western border. There was a great upright whose projecting gable, severe as that of a Doric temple, rested on columns of stuccoed masonry that gave the place a classic air and justified the direction so often given to strangers looking for it, " Take the Lexington road, and keep straight on till you come to a little co't-house."

On either side were wings which added to the breadth of the façade and gave a reassuring suggestion of housing for all guests who might choose to enter its portals. Through a rift in the honeysuckle Gordon could see from where he sat the broad double porch running back the length of the generous " ell." Its companion was on the other side, with a stairway in it giving access to the upper rooms of the ell.

It was a typical Southern house of the better sort, and had been built on the frontier by a loyal son of the Old Dominion with memories of Mount Vernon and Monticello stirring in his soul, and tenderer recollections still, perhaps, of his own boyhood's home in old Albemarle.

Colonel Trevilian had journeyed away from that old home with his flocks and his herds, his men-servants and maid-servants, like the patriarchs of old, but he had not cut away from the ancient traditions. He would build here in the wilderness a new Keswick that should be to his infant son what the old Keswick had been to him—an ancestral home, full of tender memories, at once an anchor and an inspiration.

He laid his foundations broad and deep. He built to stay. The place would go down to Beverly, and Beverly's

children after him some day, and it must be worthy of the Trevilians. Most men have some ruling passion, says Henry van Dyke. This was Colonel Trevilian's: To found an honorable house in the State of his adoption; to make the name of Trevilian respected in Jackson County as for generations it had been in Albemarle; to bequeath to his son and heir an estate commensurate with the position he would inherit, and entitling him to a place among the landed gentry of the new commonwealth;—these were the hopes and aspirations welling up in his heart as he had stood twenty years before on the site of Keswick, with his first-born son pressed to his breast, and looked out over the swelling prairies that lay serene in the consciousness of latent strength. This was the thought that had dominated his life through all these years.

Keswick, as it stood in its chaste beauty, was the flower of a mingled hope and steadfast purpose whose trunks had grown together and whose roots had been striking deeper year by year. With some men, love of the soil and the habitation they have made to grow ranks with love of human things.

"And you go on Monday," the girl was saying, regretfully,—"you and brother."

"Yes. On the *Thomas H. Benton*—down the Missouri and up the Ohio. We separate at Cincinnati, you know. I go from there to Lexington, and Beverly on to Virginia."

"I know. It 's too bad you can't be together!"

"Well, we 've kept together a good long time. Our ways will have to divide sometime, I suppose. I can hardly remember a day that Beverly and I have not seen each other—'Damon and Pythias,' father calls us."

"And mother, 'David and Jonathan.' She says any time, 'Well, Jonathan, have you seen David?'"

He smiled at her clever mimicry.

"And you 've been friends through it all, have n't you? Never fall out, or anything like that?"

"Never. We don't always think alike, but—"

"I reckon it is because you are so different that you are such good friends. Now Sallie and I have fusses any time at all! But then we always make up. You see, Sallie has red hair, and—well—I reckon mine is a little tinged when it comes to fusses! I really think it is."

He was looking quizzically at the rippling mass of dark brown on her shapely head, a wave of which he lifted now with a pencil he held.

"I think I have observed that myself," he said, with a slight smile,—"*when it comes to fusses.*"

"Go 'way from here, Gordon Lay! You have n't at all! I am amiability itself! . . . I really don't know what we are going to do without you boys," she continued seriously. "We shall miss you dreadfully."

"Oh, Virge, will you?" He moved toward her, all his flippancy gone.

"Why, of course. Brother being in the house with me, and such a tease, I could n't help missing him, and I know Sallie will feel the same way about you."

He moved back. Sallie was his orphaned cousin who, with her mother, had lived in his father's house for years. He was glad she would miss him, but it was not the assurance he most desired to-day.

Perhaps she saw something of this in his face, for suddenly she exclaimed, "How sweet those pansies are! Mother calls them heart's-ease. I just love them!"

The young man stepped to the border and gathered a handful.

"I should be glad if I could gratify every unspoken wish of yours as quickly, Virginia," he said very seriously as he gave them to her.

She buried her face in their cool fragrance. When she lifted it the color was still in her cheek.

"My deepest wish—spoken or unspoken—at present," she said gaily, ignoring his look, "is to be somewhere where something is likely to happen. It is all very nice for you and brother—you are going off to travel and see people as well as go to college. But Sallie and I have to stay here at home and content ourselves with the same little old school-house that we 've sat in all our days!"

"And there could n't be a dearer old place."

"No doubt—to those that have left it! 'How blessings brighten as they take their flight!' I suppose I should feel the same way if I were just starting off to Monticello or Elizabeth Aul Seminary. I wish I were! But mother won't hear to a boarding-school. Well,—anyway, this is my last year of school! Next year, when I am eighteen, I am going to Richmond on a visit. A-ha! Then I 'll be Miss Trevilian! having beaus! and a good time! while you 'll be plodding away in school!"

She rose mockingly, caught her pink lawn skirt daintily between her fingers, and made him a low courtesy. "Miss Trevilian, Dr. Lay! Ah-h!"

"I thought you were Miss Trevilian now—having beaus—and a good time."

"Oh, boys don't count," she said scornfully—"boys you 've been raised with. I 'm talking about young gentlemen—real grown-up, sure-enough beaus."

"Very fine!" He was feeling unaccountably depressed. There was likely to be a good deal of truth in what she was saying. Then he rose and shook his tall frame. "Well,—I reckon I 'd better be going."

"Don't hurry. There 's something I want to ask you." He sat down.

"I went down to the grape-vine tree this morning."

"Oh, did you?" He spoke eagerly. The grape-vine

tree had been the trysting-place for the four since they were children. "I was going down there myself, but—"

"But you concluded to take a walk down by the branch instead. I saw you. Who was the girl with you?"

She was watching him narrowly. The slight start that he gave did not escape her notice.

He smiled slightly. "Whom did it look like?"

"It looked like Lois Chandler. But, of course, it was n't."

The mocking eyes that looked into his had just a suspicion of anxiety in them, as if she wanted confirmation of her statement that it could n't be.

"Why of course?"

"Because—because—"

"Is there really any reason why if I—or Beverly—or any of the boys—wanted to tell Lois Chandler good-by, we should n't do it?"

Virginia's head was up, and her hair taking the dangerous tinge.

"None in the world that I know—if you wanted to! Was it Lois? I don't see why there should be any secret about it."

"Nor I."

"Well, then, tell me!"

He was silent a moment. "If there is any secret, Virginia,—mind, I don't say there is,—it is not mine to give away. That 's all."

"Oh, you think she would n't want it known. Well,—perhaps she would n't!"

Virginia was very much vexed. She had started to find out all about this thing, and she had been quietly and neatly foiled. And Miss Virginia Trevilian was not accustomed to defeat.

They sat in silence a few moments,—Virginia pulling the hearts relentlessly out of the pansies she loved so.

Then he spoke quite naturally, as though the last subject had been finished up and it was time to introduce another.

"Virginia, father was telling us a strange story yesterday. Would you like to hear it?"

"I don't care."

It was spoken very indifferently. He looked up, not at her face, but her head.

"Virge, do you know I think your hair *is* a little red."

She broke into a laugh at that, ashamed of her temper.

"Nonsense! There 's nothing the matter with my hair this time. I 'm sure I don't care whom you go walking with. What 's your story?"

Gordon felt better. It was not his intention to tell her anything more about this matter than she already knew, but he would be sorry to have anything come between them just as he was going away. He settled himself to tell the story.

"Well,—father was called over to Kansas yesterday—to Lawrence—in consultation. Just as he was starting home he noticed that there was some excitement down the street a little way, and he rode over to see what it was. There was a dead man lying on the ground, and a crowd around him. Father says he never saw men laboring under such excitement. One man turned around to him, his teeth chattering and his face as white as a sheet, and said, 'Another!' He says they all looked as if they had seen a ghost."

"What was the matter with them?" Virginia asked, her vexation all forgotten in her interest. "They surely ought to be used to seeing dead men in Kansas by this time."

"It was n't simply his being dead. It was the way he was killed. Father got down and examined him closely.

There was a round bullet-hole in the middle of the forehead."

"Well, what was there strange in that?"

"The strange part is to come. They say that every little while a man is picked up around there, killed in that same way. This is the fifteenth, they told father."

"Mercy, Gordon! You scare me to death!"

"Is n't it frightful! Father says people are perfectly desperate over it. Nobody can tell who the next one will be, and nobody knows what to protect himself against. That 's the worst of it."

"Have n't they any clue to who does it?"

"Not the slightest. When they find the man he is always dead, and 'dead men tell no tales,' you know. But every few months there is a new victim—and always in this same way."

They sat in dismayed contemplation of it.

"Well!" said a gay voice in the doorway, "you look very solemncholy! What 's the matter?"

"Hello, Sallie! Where did you come from?"

"Oh, 'from going to and fro in the earth,' like Satan, and 'from walking up and down in it,'—or rather riding, if you want the exact truth."

"Where is brother?"

"Here!" spoke a voice over Sallie's shoulder, as a handsome curly head and a pair of broad shoulders were thrust into view. "Who 's callin' the roll?"

"Miss Abby Ann Cheever!" The sepulchral tone, with its strong nasal twang, came from between Virginia's red lips, and she lifted a frowning brow to him. "Don't let me hear you say 'callin'' again! Remember your *g*'s! That is what Aunt Nan says she will say to me."

"Oh, *dear!* I suppose our incarceration begins Monday!" groaned Sallie.

"Yes, if the incarcerator does n't strike a sand-bar. We

are all anxiety about that now. Liz is in a great state of excitement because mother says she can wait on Miss Abby. I suppose I 'll have to wait on myself or fall back on Mammy. Liz has about drained me of ribbons and belts and so forth, and I suppose she thinks a lady from Boston will be fat game."

After a little more jesting about Miss Abby, Gordon asked, "Really,—what have you two been up to?"

It was Sallie that answered.

"Beverly has been making himself popular with the old ladies in the neighborhood by going around telling them good-by,—just what you ought to have been doing, Mr. Gordon Lay, instead of wasting your time in the Trevilian summer-house." And that was just the difference between the two. Beverly remembered everybody, while Gordon thought only of Virginia

"And what were you doing while brother was so virtuous?" asked Virginia.

"Chaperoning Beverly. I could n't risk him alone with all those designing mammas! Of course not. So I sacrificed myself for his good. But what were *you*-all so sober about?" she persisted, dropping into the seat opposite them and making room for Beverly at her side. "I want to know."

"Virginia says she saw me out walking this morning down by the branch, and she was trying to get me to tell who it was with me," said Gordon, looking straight at Beverly, not Sallie. "Bev, would you tell?" If Virginia had been on guard she might have seen a questioning look and a swift answering frown pass between them.

"No," said Beverly, carelessly, "girls have too much curiosity."

"That was n't it at all!" cried Virginia, indignantly. "I 'm sure I don't care who Gordon walks with! He

was telling me about the man Dr. Lay saw in Lawrence, and—"

"Ugh! was n't that horrible!" interrupted Sallie. "I 've been feeling my forehead every fifteen minutes since, to see if I had been hit 'unbeknownst' to me, as old Aunt Dicey says. But it seems that this is 'for men only.'"

"What do you make of it, Gordon?" asked Beverly. "Sallie has just been telling me about it."

Gordon shook his head with a gesture of giving it up. "I hardly know. It seems to me it must be the work of one man—not many could aim like that and hit the mark every time—but what the motive can—"

"Don't let 's talk any more about it!" cried Virginia, impetuously. "I 'm ready to jump out of my skin now! I know I will dream of it to-night. Sallie, have you seen the school-house since it was fixed up? Let 's go and take a look at it."

The girls started together and the two young men followed, discussing the case as they went. They were strikingly alike in height and build, a fact that Virginia, looking back to make some remark, noticed for the first time with a start.

Then Sallie cried, "Oh, there is your father now. See! he 's waving the letter." And the school-house idea was abandoned.

They all gathered on the porch to wait for him,—Mrs. Trevilian and Miss Nannie coming out too, and even Mammy hovering in the background to be the first to spread the news.

Colonel Trevilian threw the bridle to Jake and came up the walk bordered with flowers.

"How are you, Gordon? Howdy, Sallie? As blooming as ever, I see. Well, my dear,"—turning to his wife,—"she 'll be here to-morrow."

That evening, as Beverly Trevilian started from the dining-room, where he had been doing justice to prairie-chicken and hot waffles, Virginia looked at the hat he had taken up. It was a black and white straw just like Gordon's.

"Brother, where were you this morning?"

"Out hunting. Aren't you eating the fruit of my labors now?"

"Oh!"

It *was* Gordon, after all, then

CHAPTER II

MISS ABBY ANN ARRIVES

AT the close of the Keswick school the June before, it had been decided that they must have a better teacher than they had heretofore had, or else send their daughters away as they had sent their sons. Colonel Trevilian advocated securing one from the North.

"Will you board her?" asked Mr. Swamscott.

They all wanted the teacher, but none of them cared to introduce a new and doubtful element into their homes.

"Yes, sir, I'll board her," said the Colonel, stoutly. "My servants are beyond tampering with."

The whole matter had been put into his hands, and negotiations were entered upon at once with a prominent educator of the State by which a competent lady was to be chosen for the position. That lady was Miss Abby Ann Cheever, of Massachusetts, who came with unquestionable recommendations as to character and attainments.

They had the vaguest ideas about her on Grand Prairie, having seen but few Northern people in the course of their lives and being accustomed to look a little askance at a Massachusetts Yankee as a possible, even probable, Abolitionist. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was fresh in the minds of the South then, though with most of them, it must be admitted, it was hearsay knowledge.

"Do you suppose I will have to keep cold light bread for her all the time?" asked Mrs. Trevilian of Miss Nannie.

"No! Of course you won't! She'll take to hot bread

like a duck to water if she does n't have to cook it. They say the Yankees all do."

"I hope so," sighed Mrs. Trevilian. "It would be a heap of trouble to have to keep in cold light bread."

"I only hope she is ladylike," Miss Nannie said. "Somehow, I always think of these Northern teachers that go about the country as having short hair and bad manners."

"Why, so do I!" marveled her sister-in-law. "I wonder why."

In far-off Massachusetts Miss Abby Ann Cheever was pondering the new relation with quite as much concern. She and her family with her felt that she was almost taking her life in her hands to go among the "border ruffians." But her younger brother, Dr. Abiel Cheever, had been one of the first of the faithful to speed to Kansas when the race for occupancy began; and if things got too hot in Missouri she could go to him in Lawrence, it was decided.

Perhaps it might not be dangerous, after all; but then you never could tell what these slaveholders would do—they were like the human heart, "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked," said her maiden aunt, Miss Tabitha Cheever.

"It will give you an opportunity, my daughter, to do something for those poor suffering people, the slaves," said her father, impressively. "I want you should make use of every occasion that presents itself for instilling truth into their darkened minds. 'Be instant in season and out of season,'"—an admonition that Miss Abby Ann Cheever really did not need, being, like her father, a strong partizan, and a trifle too much inclined by temperament to lay stress upon the last clause of St. Paul's command.

"If you were only going to Kansas I should feel safe about you," sighed her mother. "But Missouri!"

The Cheevers were Abolitionists of the straitest sect,—a fact entirely unknown to Colonel Trevilian and the rest of her constituency, or—it is safe to say—Miss Abby Ann would never have been invited to undertake the training of their children.

"Well, Kansas is not far away," said Miss Abby, soothingly. "There is not even a river to separate it from Jackson County."

Alas! Alas! A trivial fact, apparently, but one fraught with mighty consequences to that doomed region a few years later.

THE weather was not propitious for pleasant impressions the day Miss Abby Ann Cheever reached her destination. There had been a downfall of rain for a day and night. Everybody knows what that does to western Missouri roads. The black mud looked bottomless.

Miss Abby's depression matched it as from the guards of the *Thomas H. Benton* (the same that was to carry the boys away) she watched the mule-teams with their loaded freight-wagons struggle through it. If there had been a waiting Pullman bound for Boston, it is possible that the Grand Prairie school might have been minus a head that day and thereafter. But a journey from Massachusetts to Missouri in the fifties was a thing not to be entered upon lightly or unadvisedly; and having been made, the return trip was seldom taken short of years. So retreat formed no part of Miss Cheever's thoughts as she looked out upon the scene before her.

It was only a steamboat-landing that she saw. The town lay four miles back, and Keswick a great way beyond.

"Do you know how far it is from Independence to

Colonel Trevilian's place?" she had asked the captain when she found he knew where she was going. Colonel Trevilian had written to him and placed Miss Cheever under his care from St. Louis to Independence, not having much opinion of women traveling around the country alone. The captain had shown her every attention that a gentleman could, but Miss Abby's scholarly instincts were stirred to their depths at his speech.

"Oh, it 's a right smart piece," he answered. "I reckon it must be fo'teen or fifteen miles—maybe mo'."

She was thinking of the distance as she looked out at the landing. Fortunately, however, a toilsome road—like life itself—must be traversed one step at a time, and most of its sloughs are hidden from us until we are in them. Then our energies are absorbed in getting out, which lessens the tediousness of it incalculably.

Miss Abby kept her place as the boat puffed and churned the turbid brown waters of the Missouri in its efforts to make the landing. With New England preparedness, she had had her effects in place an hour ago. She had nothing to do but to watch the scene and look out for Colonel Trevilian.

The captain had relieved her fear that she might possibly find nobody to meet her.

"Did n't Colonel Trevilian say he would come?" he asked. "Well, ma'am, he will be here if he has to swim a hawss."

She rested upon this assurance and looked about her with a mighty interest. In addition to the natural curiosity of a newcomer about the country that is to be his home, there was the intense tragic interest felt by every Northern man or woman who set foot for the first time on slave soil,—that unwilling fascination which impels us against our will to look upon the thing that we know will haunt us forever with its horrors.

"I am face to face with it!" she said to herself. "These are undoubtedly slaves!"

She was looking down at the roustabouts lounging around the landing while they waited for the gang-plank to be thrown out.

Miss Abby Cheever had in her youth, now some time past, seen a picture that made an ineffaceable impression upon her—an impression deepened by constant recurrence to the subject and much somber thought in one deepening groove. It was of a naked negro on one knee, with manacled hands raised imploringly, while over him stood his cruel master with upraised lash.

She had always thought of slaves as looking like that. Not that she really supposed the business or pleasure of the Southern planter would be to chastise his servants from morn till eve, nor indeed that in a decent community they were kept in a state of nature as to their wearing-apparel,—she was too bright a woman to think either one. But a picture makes a lasting impression on a child,—a fact not unknown to the purveyors of such illustrations in the years of crude art and deep feeling preceding the Civil War.

Now as Miss Abby looked into the faces of the men below she did not see the sullen look, the hopeless woe, that ought to have been there. She was distinctly—relieved? No—disappointed! It was as when one standing beside Pisa's tower says, with outraged surprise, "It is n't right! It does n't lean enough!"

A tall, fine-looking man with iron-gray hair and a slouch-hat was at the landing. Back a little distance was a carriage with a mule-team and a colored driver. A gray horse was fastened near. Miss Abby felt instinctively that this was her company. Nor was she mistaken. When the gang-plank was thrown out, the tall man boarded the boat and the captain piloted him to Miss

Abby, leaving his post to deliver his charge into the Colonel's hands.

Colonel Trevilian was such a man as a woman instinctively likes and trusts. He greeted her as cordially as if he had always known her, apologized for the weather, which he feared had given her a poor impression of the State, thanked the captain for his attentions to her, apparently under the impression that he had received a personal favor, relieved her of the bandbox brought in her hand all the way from Massachusetts, and gave it to a negro man called from the wharf with a peremptory "Here, boy! take this to my carriage!" his hand instinctively seeking his pocket as the service was rendered.

Miss Abby looked around for the boy, but could not see any. She said good-by to the captain and started across the plank.

"Wait, Miss Cheever! Better take my arm, madam," said the Colonel, hastily. "It 's mighty slippery!"

He led her carefully across the gangway, helped her up an embankment, and brought up at the edge of a mudhole from which there seemed no escape. He looked at it ruefully. Then—"If you don't object—I 'm an old man, you know," and before Miss Cheever knew what there was to object to, he had lifted her bodily in his strong arms and set her down dry-shod on the other side.

"There really was no other way, madam," he said apologetically, "without gettin' yo' feet wet. Reuben, back up as close as you can. There! You won't feel afraid of the mules, Miss Cheever? I as-shore you they are perfectly safe, madam. I believe they don't use them much in your country. But a mule's foot is made for mud. We would get along mighty porely without them here."

He was tucking a Bay State shawl snugly around her. "There! Now, Miss Cheever, I will leave you in Uncle

Reuben's care. He 'll take good care of you. He is a careful driver."

Uncle Reuben acknowledged the introduction by taking off his hat and murmuring, "Sarvent, Mistis," and Miss Abby bowed, strangely embarrassed. She did not know what to call him.

"The roads are so heavy that I rode over on horseback," continued the Colonel, "but I 'll be right along by you."

His deferential, protecting manner was most grateful to Miss Abby Cheever, who had knocked around the world a good deal and been suffered on many occasions to look out for herself. She could do it as well as anybody, but when this kind, deferential gentleman took upon himself, as a matter of course, the task of seeing to her comfort and helping her over mud-holes—she liked it. We all do, no matter how independent we are, provided only that the hand be strong enough—and gentle.

Colonel Trevilian rode along by the carriage when it was possible to do so, and kept up a scattering fire of conversation.

"Getting along all right, Miss Cheever? That 's good. Yes, madam, it is fo' miles from the landing to Independence, and about fo'teen from there to Keswick." It sounded very much to Miss Abby as if he said "thar."

Then a mud-hole would intervene and conversation be suspended. And Miss Abby would look shudderingly into the depths and think of the mule's foot and hope for the best. She had never dreamed of such mud—and no wonder. In rock-ribbed New England she had never seen the material, in quality or quantity, of which it could be made. She was literally in the deepest, richest soil of a deep, rich State.

"The going is very bad," she remarked after one such slough.

Uncle Reuben half reined up the mules.

"Ma'am?"

"I say the going is very bad."

He looked blank.

"The going—the roads, you know."

"Oh, yaas'm! yaas'm!" The old man wore a relieved look, as of one who had found his bearings. "Yaas'm, hit is so. De travelin' 's mons'us bad, mistis."

It gave Miss Abby a distinct shock to be called "mistis." It seemed to make her a partaker in the slaveholder's guilt. Her first impulse was to repudiate the title and tell him that "one was his master, even Christ," and none was his mistress or should be.

But Uncle Reuben had used the term so cheerfully and naturally, with so little of self-abasement, that she restrained the impulse and decided to wait a while. But she felt like a coward. "In season and out of season," her father had said, and she had promised.

Miss Abby sincerely wished to enter into conversation with Uncle Reuben, but hardly knew how to begin. She was desirous of asking immediate questions about his state of servitude and his feeling in regard to it. He had probably been a slave all his life. How the iron must have entered his soul! He was doubtless brooding over it now.

In reality, Uncle Reuben was wondering what sort of a "white-'oman" this was that was so unsociable and say-nothing. If it had been Miss Matt Dawson, now, whom he so often brought out from Independence, he would have had a chance to tell her all about the family and Aunt Dilsey, and his own rheumatism and the last big meeting and a dozen other things—and she would have been interested in them all. But this white-'oman! And when an old-time darky begins to denominate any lady of his acquaintance a "white-'oman" it is a sure sign

that her stock is depreciating. But, of course, Uncle Reuben was too well trained to do more than think all this.

"Have you lived long at Colonel Trevilian's?"

It seemed to her a delicate way of introducing the subject uppermost in her mind without referring directly to his bondage. She could not bring herself to call him "uncle," which seemed to her a kind of claiming relationship for which she was unprepared, and yet she did not want to call him Reuben. Her question seemed curt and almost impolite without the softening which the name would have given.

Uncle Reuben raised his hat with a gesture that was the counterpart of Colonel Trevilian's.

"All my life, mistis," he said, with visible pride. "I was bawn in de fambly."

Miss Abby caught her breath. She did not know whether this was supposed to be matter for congratulation or condolence except from his pride of demeanor.

"Yaas'm, we all done b'longed to de Trevilians as fur back as de reck'nin' goes."

He was thinking, "Ef she 'lows I 'm anybody's bought nigger I 'll jes' let her know right now she 's on de wrong trail!"

Then he produced his highest trump.

"My daddy was ole marse's body-servant. Yaas'm." He announced it as if it were a patent of nobility. "I druv Marse William over to Jedge Caruthers to be married and den brung 'em back nex' day to de infa'r. Yaas'm." He waited a moment for this to sink in. "I been drivin' of de kerriage ever sence, even to carryin' ole miss to her las' home. Marse William say I was de one what was 'titled to it, caze my daddy was ole marse's body-servant. Yaas'm."

Miss Abby felt that she was taking soundings in an un-

fathomable sea. The sympathy she was longing to give voice to seemed strangely inconsequent as she listened to this recital of an interlacing of interests in joy and sorrow that linked black and white together. She determined to defer the expression of it till a more opportune time.

It was hours before a turn in the road brought Keswick into view, and then it was miles away, for one sees a great distance on the prairie. Uncle Reuben pointed to it with his whip.

"Dar 's our house," he said, with manifest pride. "Yaas'm, dat 's Keswick. Can you see de white pillars? Jes' thoo dat clump er trees."

As they got nearer he called attention to the different points about the place.

"Way over dar beyant de gyarden is de buryin'-groun'."

"I don't see any church," commented Miss Abby. She was looking for New England on Missouri soil.

"No'm, dey ain' no chu'ch roun' dar. De chu'ch is way over hyarnder. You jes' kin see it."

"I want to know!"

And Uncle Reuben repeated his statement.

"Don't they have the graveyard by the church?"

"No'm. Dey all has fambly buryin'-groun's roun' hyeah. Dey ain't nobody in ourn but Miss Bettie's little chil'n an' ole 'oman Judy. She died de same summer dey did, an' Miss Bettie say she want her laid out dar wid 'em. Of co'se dey 's a fence betwixt 'em, but de same willer wha' me an' Miss Bettie planted over de chil'n shades Aunt Judy too. I 've hauled bar'ls an' bar'ls er water fur dat willer. Yaas'm, I is so."

It was dusk when the carriage stopped in front of Keswick. A little negro had seen them and run down to open the "big gate." Colonel Trevilian was waiting to

receive them, Beverly by his side. A shambling negro boy had taken the bridle carelessly thrown to him, and led the gray horse to the stable.

Peeping out from behind chimneys and around rose-bushes and various other points of vantage were nappy heads surmounting round, shiny, brown faces that appeared, disappeared, and reappeared with bewildering rapidity.

"Miss Cheever, my son Beverly, who is unfortunately a little too old to come under your instruction. Beverly, give Miss Cheever your arm up the walk."

On the porch beside the white pillars were Mrs. Trevilian, Miss Nannie, and Virginia, while in the open door —ostentatiously holding aloft a candle to light the way— stood Mammy.

Mrs. Trevilian took the worn traveler into her motherly arms and gave her a kiss of welcome as if she had been an old friend.

Miss Abby was so visibly surprised at this that Miss Nannie tempered her greeting to a hand-shake, but Virginia put up her lips as a matter of course.

And so Miss Abby was installed.

CHAPTER III

WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE AND FOUND WANTING

AT bedtime Mrs. Trevilian took the new teacher to her room herself, turning down the bed, and looking after her comfort in various ways. She left Liz, Virginia's maid, to help her undress, greatly to Miss Abby's consternation.

Help her undress, indeed! She had performed that office for herself since she was four, having at that tender age been crowded into the world of individual enterprise by the advent of a second sister younger than herself. She would greatly have preferred Liz's room to her help.

But the girl took her bonnet and put it on the shelf in the wardrobe quite as a matter of course, folded her shawl and laid it away also, and then waited for orders.

Miss Abby had none to give. She wanted of all things to have her attendant go away. Undressing seemed to her too private and personal a matter to be entered upon before another, and that other of an alien race so manifestly curious.

The girl made no motion to leave, however, and at last Miss Abby began to take down her hair. Liz seized the brush.

"You want me to bresh yo' ha'r?" she asked, with recollections of the sociable time that always accompanied this nightly service to her Miss Virginia.

Miss Abby drew back.

"Oh, no!" she said hastily, with a creepy feeling at the

thought of a negro's coming near her. "I never let anybody touch my hair."

Liz felt the rebuff. Negroes, like children, are quick to read mental states, particularly those that are antagonistic, and Miss Abby's feeling amounted to absolute repulsion. She took herself to task for this afterward, but at the time it was entirely beyond her control.

"Ef you 'll set down I 'll take off yo' shoes," Liz said rather coldly. Clearly, she would have to prompt this New England lady as to what a lady's-maid might properly do.

Divesting Miss Abby's feet of their outer coverings, she found them decidedly cold, and her kindly instincts were at once aroused. Stepping out upon the porch, she returned with a noggin, which she filled with hot water from a bucket on the hearth.

Miss Abby sat in bewildered wonder at what was coming. A moment later Liz was on her knees before her, stripping off a stocking from that astounded maiden's foot.

"What are you doing?" she demanded sternly. She began to think the girl was half-witted.

"I gwineter wash yo' foots," Liz returned, half indignantly. She did not understand having friendly offices met this way.

"*What!*"

"Yo' foots is cold. You ain' gwine to bed wi' cold foots, is you? I gwineter wash 'em fur you."

"Certainly not!" said Miss Abby, firmly, withdrawing the members in dispute within the security of her dress-skirts. "I should n't think of allowing such a thing!"

Liz's face darkened. She took up the noggin and all the rest of the paraphernalia. At the door she turned.

"I reckon you ain't never is had any maid, is you?" she asked.

It was as much as she dared say—much more than she would have dared let Miss Bettie know she had said. The fatal suspicion was forming in her mind that Miss Abby was "po' white folks."

"Never!" said Miss Abby, firmly. "And I never want to have! I don't think I shall need you any more to-night."

Liz retired with head up.

Miss Abby told Mrs. Trevilian one day about this episode. It was after she had been there long enough to feel better acquainted than she did that first night.

"Yes," Mrs. Trevilian had said quietly, "I knew about it. Liz told me."

"She did? Well, don't you think it was a very strange thing for her to do?—very—well—familiar?"

"From your point of view—yes. But not from hers. On the contrary, it was a very natural thing for her to do."

Miss Abby stared. She did not more than half like Mrs. Trevilian's taking it so quietly.

"I should like to know the point of view that would make it natural," she said dryly.

"Well, I can easily give it to you. Liz has been Virginia's maid from the time she was born. I gave her to her then." (There was a little obscurity about the pronouns, but not more than the facts warranted. Nobody could have told whether Virginia was given to Liz or Liz to Virginia.) "She has always done for her just the things she wanted to do for you—put away her things, brushed her hair, and bathed her feet. She naturally supposed that you would want the same things done, and when she found your feet cold she offered you, in the kindness of her heart, a hot foot-bath. I will grant that she was unfortunate in her wording of the offer—" she laughed a little at the remembrance of what was said and done—"but she meant it kindly."

"But I should n't think of allowing anybody to do so

menial a thing for me!" exclaimed Miss Abby. "I told her so."

"She does n't look upon it as menial. And she did n't understand your motive in declining. You only succeeded in hurting her feelings. They are very much like children, but they almost always mean well."

"They are a very strange people," said Miss Abby. "I don't understand them at all."

"Don't you think," Mrs. Trevilian returned gently but suggestively, "that until you do, it might be better for you to take them just as they are? They are all right when you know them. And, Miss Abby," she added, "while we are on the subject—I wish you would n't call them 'slaves' in their presence. We always speak of them as the servants."

"They *are* slaves," returned Miss Abby, stoutly.

"Yes, but there is no use keeping it constantly before them."

"It ought to be kept before them!" The New England woman would not compromise. "And before everybody else too!"

She wrote to her mother that night.

"These are the most inconsistent people I ever saw. They will require the most menial, degrading services from the blacks, and then caution others, who would n't think of allowing such things to be done for them, *not to hurt their feelings!*"

But this was weeks after that first night, when, after Liz's dismissal, the harassed lady was preparing for bed. She had just blown out her candle and ensconced herself in the high feather-bed when there came a knock at the door.

"Who 's there?"

"It 's me," answered Liz. "I got to come in."

Miss Abby rose and unlocked the door. There stood Liz with a bundle of bedding in her arms.

"What do you want?" demanded Miss Abby, somewhat abruptly. She was mystified beyond measure at the apparition.

"Miss Bettie she say I was to sleep in hyeah on de flo'."

"To sleep in my room! For what reason? Haven't you any other place?"

Liz stared.

"Yaas'm! Co'se I is! But she 'low maybe you was skeery."

"But I don't want you to stay! I'm not afraid!"

Liz quietly deposited her bed-clothes on the floor, and began arranging her pallet.

"Yaas'm. Miss Bettie she 'low maybe you'd say it wa'n't wuth while, but she say I was to stay."

Apparently, that settled it. Much against her will, Miss Abby relocked the door and betook herself to bed.

It is not strange that she looked upon her protector with some shrinking. The next day would be the Sabbath, and Liz's locks were in training for the sanctuary, which is to say they had just been "wropped,"—and that means that they were done up in innumerable pigtails tied with white cord strung from one to the other. It formed a network which to Miss Abby's unaccustomed eyes was startlingly uncanny. The poor lady could not quiet her soul.

Long after Liz was lost in slumber, and giving unmistakable evidence of it, Miss Abby lay with fascinated, staring eyes turned toward that head.

The moon rose, and threw wavering shadows of leafy branches across the window-panes. The dogs bayed the moon, and Miss Abby thought of bloodhounds and fugitive slaves. The feather-bed grew hotter and more cavernous, the atmosphere more oppressive. She rose at last and stepped, shudderingly, past Liz to the back window to raise it.

The soft moonlight flooded the place. The smoke-house, the hen-house, the spring-house, *et al.*, stood out black and ghostly; beyond, she could see the line of cabins which stood to her for so many prison-houses of despair. To think that those poor things were all locked in!

And Liz snored on.

Miss Abby Cheever knelt down on the other side of the bed and invoked the protection of the Almighty against "foes without and fears within."

She felt very, very far from New England.

She was sleeping soundly the next morning, worn out with her ride and her vigil, when she was awakened by a prolonged knock. It fitted in so perfectly with her dream that it was repeated several times before she was brought to a realization of her surroundings.

"Who is it?" she called at last, sitting up in bed, and brushing her hair back, with a confused notion of setting herself to rights. She was not accustomed to having her privacy invaded in this manner.

"'T ain't nobody but me," said a feminine voice. "I come to mek yo' fire." Then in a grumbling undertone, "I reckon dat triflin' Liz gwineter sleep tell de jedgment day!"

Miss Abby unlocked the door, and Mammy appeared with a shovel of coals.

"'Scuse me, young mistis," she remarked apologetically; "I wa'n't gwineter wake you, but I could n't git in. Huccome you to lock yo' do'?"

"I always lock my door," returned Miss Abby.

Mammy was on her knees before the fireplace. She looked around in open-mouthed astonishment.

"You do! Name o' God, mistis, what sort er outlandish place is you come f'om dat you gotter lock de do'? We-all don't never lock up."

"But this is an outside door," protested Miss Abby. It opened upon the upper porch.

"We-all don't lock none of 'em. I don't reckon dere 's a key on dis place—of co'se de cabins jes' has latches—but dey useter be keys to de house. Whar did you git dis hyeah key?"

"It was in the door, where a key ought to be," said Miss Abby.

"Humph! I dunno whar it come f'om. I ain' hyeahed about any keys befo'." In reality, Mrs. Trevilian had the day before hunted it up, thinking that Miss Abby might feel nervous with her door unfastened.

"De front-do' key was lost when Miss Figinia was a baby," said Mammy, returning to the subject after the first blaze was started. "I always mistrested Marse Beverly throwed it down in de well, but we ain't know fur sho', an' de do' ain't been locked sence. No'm! Dey ain't no rogues aroun' hyeah."

"I prefer to lock my door," Miss Abby said, with dignity. "I don't mind getting up to let you in. Or I could make my fire myself if you would have some kindling always ready."

Now kindling was an unknown quantity on that place. They always used chips and a shovelful of coals. And who ever heard of a lady making her own fire!

There was a slight but very expressive shrug of Mammy's shoulders as she turned to the fireplace, the full import of which Miss Abby would not have understood had she seen it. There was a volume back of it. Liz had promptly communicated her suspicions, the night before, that the new teacher was "po' white folks," and this offer to make her own fire confirmed it. It was reported immediately at the cabins, which was unfortunate, for it placed Miss Abby in a very equivocal position.

Mammy now applied herself severely to the fire and

departed without further conversation. She did not wish to be too familiar until this new lady's social rank had been definitely ascertained.

"I am afraid this seems rather early to you, Miss Cheever," said Mrs. Trevilian as she poured out the coffee a little later. "We are obliged to have breakfast about the usual time on Sunday in order to let the servants get to church. We have some distance to go."

"Do they go to the same church with you?" asked Miss Abby, in much surprise.

"Yes, most of them are Presbyterians. Aunt Judy was a Baptist, and Aunt Viny is now, but all the others who are church members at all go with us. When the church was organized years ago, soon after we settled here, nine of the thirteen members were from Keswick, —Mr. Trevilian, Sister Nan and myself, and six of the older servants."

She called Emmeline to her with a motion of the eyebrows, and said in a low tone, "Hand Miss Cheever the cold light bread."

But Miss Cheever was finding hot waffles quite sufficient.

"Your pancakes are very nice," she remarked affably. "How do you keep them so hot?"

She had noticed before she came down the great distance between the kitchen and the house. "Don't you find it very difficult with the kitchen so far removed?"

"Not at all," said Mrs. Trevilian, cheerfully. "There is always a little negro waiting to run right in with them."

"But when it rains?"

"Oh, they turn a pan over them, or if it is raining very hard they take an umbrella. Oh, no, it is not at all inconvenient. Have a hot one."

"They are delicious," said Miss Abby, showing her

faith by her works. "I never saw any before of this shape. Woffles, do you call them?"

Emmeline's under jaw dropped, and the little darky who had brought them in started on a run for the kitchen.

"*Never seed any waffles befo'!*" cried Aunt Viny. "My Lawd! whar she raised?"

"Oh, *whar'd* you come f'om?
Knock a nigger down—"

sang Aunt Viny's Bob, who chanced at that moment to be within hearing.

"*Git* out er hyeah, you limb er Satan!" cried Aunt Viny, advancing threateningly upon him. "You let me hyeah you imperin' Marse William's white folks an' I lay I 'll—"

Bob's sentence was indeterminate. Dodging her uplifted arm with a dexterity born of much practice, he was at the woodpile before it was concluded. There he sat down to muse confusedly upon the fact that what was sauce for the goose was by no means always sauce for the goslings.

CHAPTER IV

A STRONGHOLD OF ORTHODOXY

"VIRGINIA, you 'd better go in the carriage with us," said Mrs. Trevilian, as she heard her daughter ask some question about Rob Roy.

"No'm, I don't want to. I want to ride."

"It is too muddy for you to ride," said Mrs. Trevilian, firmly. "You would ruin your riding-skirt."

"Now, mother! I 'm going to ride!—with brother."

There was rebellion in Virginia's eyes. She turned to Beverly, for at this moment Mrs. Trevilian stepped to the door to speak to her husband. "Brother, *say something!*"

"It 's all right going, Virge; but you see I 'm engaged for the return trip," was Beverly's prudent aside.

"Well, I 'll come home with father."

"Father! Yes, I know you will! . . . Oh, yes, mother, Virge and I are going together. It 's all planned. I 'll look out for her skirt."

Still Mrs. Trevilian demurred. "She would be a great deal more comfortable inside the carriage with us."

"No, she would n't!" said Miss Nannie Trevilian, as Virginia flew up-stairs. She was younger than her sister-in-law. "There are different ways of taking comfort. Some people take it in pairs."

When the carriage reached the church, Virginia was seated demurely up in the corner of the Trevilian pew, Sallie in the corresponding corner of the seat back of her, and Gordon and Beverly across the partition on the men's side. It just happened that they came so.

Hickory Grove church, to which Miss Abby was that morning introduced, was the counterpart of hundreds of Missouri churches in the year of our Lord 1859. There was the same impersonal character to its architecture that appeared in the dwelling-houses and in the pioneer millinery, where the presiding genius invested triennially, or at most biennially, in a block, and made all bonnets after one model, trimming them impartially with a bow behind, three loops at the side, and a bunch of flowers.

The head-gear inside of Hickory Grove church, however, was much more varied than this, for it was made up of sunbonnets of all hues, and scoops with blue or green barege skirts and elaborate quillings and bows, with here and there a flimsy, flippant, flowery creation from the town milliner's.

The bonnets ranged all the way from the dainty white ruffled ones, with pink strings and bows from under which fresh young faces peeped out, to the austere row of brown ginghams that covered the heads of the McTavishes, mother and daughters, who all wore dresses of the same material, down to the youngest, a babe in arms,—suggesting irresistibly the purchase of an "original package."

Miss Nannie Trevilian's piety had been seriously called in question by some of the devout scoops of Hickory Grove church, because she would always have the latest fashions from Lexington or Independence,—sometimes, it was said, even sending all the way to St. Louis for her summer bonnet. Kansas City then had so lately got over being "Westport Landing" that it could not be expected to furnish fashions for the gentry of Jackson County.

Outwardly, the building was not unlike other rural churches Miss Abby had seen; but inside there were some startling features. In the first place, the pulpit, instead of being at the farther end of the church, was placed be-

tween the two front doors, and all who went in must face the whole staring congregation. This was the distinguishing excellence of Missouri churches in ante-bellum days, and made it possible for curiosity to be frankly gratified without unseemly stretching of necks and turning of heads. A country church is so largely a social institution that it seems greatly desirable to provide for this.

The Trevilians were a little late that morning, and the peculiar architecture of the Missouri church never answered a better purpose than when they walked up the aisle. There was a large attendance in spite of the roads.

Miss Abby stood the test. She was well dressed and ladylike in appearance. The telegraphed verdict was that she would do.

There was time, before the service began, for the newcomer to look around and make some observations on her own account.

The place was as bare and guiltless of adornment as a monk's cell,—uncarpeted, uncurtained, uncushioned,—its painted seats hard and unyielding, like the faith of its worshipers. The men sat on one side, the women on the other, and giggling, whispering girls and half-grown boys flocked each by themselves. Somehow, there always seem to be more half-grown boys at a country church than anywhere else in the world. They lounged outside till the service began, the older ones ready to help from her horse every woman, young or old, that appeared. They may have been lacking in the outward polish of conventional life, those stalwart young frontiersmen, but they had been trained to deferential helpfulness to women for generations before they were born.

Not only was the church without ornament, but it seemed to Miss Abby also without ordinary comforts. Mrs. Trevilian, whose family in Virginia had been mild

ritualists of the Low Church type, had scandalized the congregation when the church was built by putting in her pew a footstool and a strip of carpet. It was thought to lean toward worldliness, if indeed it was not a concession to the "scarlet woman," and was looked at askance at first, but her example was soon followed by the well-to-do members with a startlingly variegated result.

Mrs. Trevilian had talked about a cushion, but happening to speak about it in the presence of Mrs. McTavish, whose husband was a ruling elder and magnified his office, it was brought informally before the session and frowned down,—Mr. McTavish calling attention pointedly to the woes pronounced upon those who sat at ease in Zion.

Apparently these woes did not apply to the brethren, or else they were more willing to take chances, for in half the pews on the male side were spittoons, and in the other half there ought to have been. Attention was quite impartially divided between these receptacles and the heads of the sermon.

But it was not the position of the pulpit, startling as that was, nor the patent fact that she was in a community of tobacco-chewers, that made this church stand out in Miss Abby Cheever's mind as belonging to a new order. It was the gallery in the rear, filled with dusky faces and white-turbaned heads. She had never seen negroes in a church before, and was unprepared for their presence. She had not supposed until this morning that any provision was made for the spiritual needs of the brother in black. She thought she had studied all phases of this subject, but somehow this had escaped her.

She stole surreptitious glances in that direction as they rose for prayer. It stirred her with a sense of infinite pathos to see those dull, patient faces as they listened to the man of God, and to hear their voices mingle with

those of their masters in singing His praise. She compared them in her mind to the captives of Babylon, and wondered with a flood of pity how they could "sing the Lord's songs in a strange land." She had forgotten that this to them, as to their masters, was home.

Miss Abby was destined to a still greater surprise. Soon after the Trevilian party was seated, an aged negro, whose white wool formed a most striking contrast to his black skin, came in at the front door, and sat down in a split-bottomed chair just below the high pulpit. She had noticed that the others ascended to the gallery by an outside stairway.

The old patriarch leaned forward comfortably on his staff, as though he belonged there. Miss Abby was watching him breathlessly. Knowing the Southern intolerance of presumption on the part of the alien race, she expected nothing short of instant ejectment. Nobody seemed to take any notice of him, however, and she turned toward Mrs. Trevilian with a question in her eye.

"It is Captain Hart's old Uncle Adam," that lady whispered. "He is so deaf that he can't hear up in the gallery, and Mr. Singleton had that chair put right down under the pulpit for him. He loves to come."

This little incident and its very simple explanation made a deep impression on Miss Abby. She was getting together a small stock of sensations that she hardly knew how to classify. They did not seem to belong in any of the prearranged cuddyholes of a somewhat immobile memory.

The white faces around her were less absorbing, and yet they were not without a certain fascination from the fact that they were the faces of the masters of these slaves. One versed in types would have seen that the bulk of them were of the sturdy Scotch-Irish stock; which had found its way hither *via* Ulster and the deep sea;

which had hewed its path resistlessly through the hardships of pioneer life till it had come out at last where hewing was no longer imperative—with flocks and herds, and houses and lands, and peace and plenty around. But they were the faces of men who were ready to hew still at whatever stood in their way,—the men of whom Theodore Roosevelt said years ago in his keen analysis of the "New West":

"There was little that was soft or outwardly attractive in their character; it was stern, rude, and hard, like the lives they led; but it was the character of those who were every inch men, and who were Americans to the heart's core."

Among them were faces of another type,—those which bespoke gentle blood, though not less red, whose owners spoke with more cultured phrase, and moved with the stately grace of "gentlemen of the old school." The term has been scoffed at, and travestied, and misapplied until one hesitates to use it; but to those Missourians whose memories go back to the old slave-holding days, wherever they were spent, it stands always for the central figure in the neighborhood,—judge, or colonel, or major, as the case might be,—whose manners were a trifle ornate, perhaps, whose stateliness was sometimes oppressive to a ruder presence, but whose breeding never failed. And he—or his father—almost invariably came from Virginia. He, and such as he, formed the gentry of Jackson County, though they never even in thought called themselves by any such vainglorious name.

As Miss Abby scanned the faces of the men who were to be her patrons for the coming year, she was startled to come upon one, well back against the wall, that seemed to

be staring straight at her. It was an evil face if there is anything in physiognomy.

Miss Abby returned the gaze with one that might quell even the Scotch-Irish. But the man's countenance did not change. Then she perceived that he was looking, not at her, but at Virginia, who sat beside her.

She gave an instinctive glance at the girl. Virginia was utterly unconscious of the little by-play. At the moment that Miss Abby turned, she was lifting a smiling face up to Gordon, who had just whispered something to her. Miss Abby's eyes went back to the man. He, too, had seen the radiance of Virginia's upward glance. His gaze shifted to Gordon, and a sudden look of hate leaped to his eyes. Miss Abby felt as if she had been reading the first page of a story that might turn out badly.

She wondered who the man was and why he looked at Virginia that way.

All these observations had been quietly made before the services began. It was Miss Abby's inherited custom to pay strict attention to the minister's message. It was hard to do so here, she found.

Down in the front corner of the church, on the female side, was a cedar bucket on a pine shelf. The bucket had a cocoanut gourd in it. To this fount of refreshment came, at all times through the sermon, lank mothers with crying babies and a small procession of assorted sizes at their heels. The clerical incumbent of Hickory Grove church certainly had need of clear head and steady nerves, for the competition was varied and all-compelling.

No sooner had the sermon got well under way than the children began to stray up and down the aisles, sometimes attracted by the water-bucket, sometimes to the nearer contemplation of companions of kindred tastes a little way off. Miss Abby, accustomed to the decorum of a New England city church, found herself more absorbed

in the scene around her than in the minister's points of doctrine.

Just in front of the Trevilian pew were Mrs. Brooks and her small daughter, Pattie, flanked by a little negro girl, with puffy locks, who enjoyed the distinction of being in the family pew by virtue of having to "tend to" her Miss Pattie. Apparently the "tending to" was not very thorough, for her charge escaped her espionage, and sauntered down toward the pulpit, looking back roguishly at her mother, who was making unavailing motions for her to return. Cassy was despatched to capture her, but Pattie, with a bubbling laugh that brought a grandfatherly smile to more than one face, pressed on,—her dusky caretaker, who was only a few years older, following.

Pattie seated herself on the top step leading to the pulpit, and Cass—as was proper—took the step below. Then this reprehensible nurse showed her Miss Pattie the reticule of "sweet cakes" put in to break the fast on the way home, and Pattie decided that the time for refreshments was now. She took the bag, graciously gave a cake to Cass, and took one herself.

The effect upon that congregation of youngsters was electrical. With a rising as spontaneous as that which lay behind the Children's Crusade, they started. Pattie was soon surrounded by a throng of silent, hungry satellites who put their fingers in their mouths, but said never a word. But Pattie knew! Reaching down, she generously handed each mute suppliant a cake. They dropped down below her on the steps, one by one, to rise again when that was gone and stand as before.

Then Pattie began to look anxious. She investigated the bag, sized up her following, and prudently broke the remainder of the cakes in halves. A smile rippled over the feminine side of the house at this exhibition of house-

wifely caution, there was a giggle from Sallie, and Mr. Singleton wondered what was going on down below.

He had not time to investigate, however, for at this moment a barefooted little urchin on the other side began to straggle near the pulpit. Mr. Singleton saw his approach with dismay, while Virginia and Gordon exchanged amused glances. It was little Tommy Trawles, who feared neither God nor Mr. McTavish, and least of all the kindly minister.

Tommy mounted the steps, and Mr. Singleton involuntarily put out his hand to ward off the attack. Tommy seized it promptly, and tugged at it to secure a hearing.

"Mithter Thingleton!"

The beleaguered minister gently extricated himself from Tommy's grasp and patted him on the head, trying hard to hold on to the heads of his discourse. He began to realize the penalties of a man's making himself too friendly in his parish.

But young Trawles was of a persevering turn of mind. He caught the tortured ecclesiastic (who was rosily conscious that Virginia Trevilian was smothering a laugh) by the coat-tail, and held on till he had told his tale of woe in a shrill, childish treble that reached all but the dull ears of Uncle Adam below:

"Mithter Thingleton! I got a thore toe!"

There was a moment in which even the elders lost the connection. Then Mr. Trawles, Sr., who ought to have been on duty long ago, reached for the culprit, and the episode was closed—behind the house.

Miss Abby was not able to recall quite all the heads of the sermon when she got home, but she found herself the possessor of some very new and distinct impressions, for all that.

Mrs. Trevilian took the opportunity after church, while the horses were being hitched up, to introduce her to the

ladies whose children she would have in school. It was the hour when the informal reception was always held. As the dark-hued charioteers also took this time for a pleasant exchange of civilities, and nobody in the section ever hurried, the occasion was sometimes prolonged until the dark suspicion arose in the minds of the ungodly that the social features of Hickory Grove church rivaled in importance the spiritual.

There was a pleasant little coterie of kindred spirits on Grand Prairie at that time, such as may often be found in pioneer communities where a few families constitute the Brahman class. These were the ones who were gathering around Miss Abby now—representative people of the neighborhood. To the outskirts of this group came a man and woman who had watched from afar the gathering of this little company, and after a few words of consultation had walked resolutely across to join it.

They stood at Mrs. Trevilian's back, but in full sight of Miss Nannie and the new teacher. A very casual observer could have seen that they had come for the express purpose of being presented, but they were standing where Mrs. Trevilian could not see them, and Miss Nannie ignored their presence beyond a bow. They waited a few moments, listening to the lively conversation with an evident sense of being on the outside, and then turned abruptly and walked off. Miss Abby's eyes followed them. The woman was saying something in a low, excited tone, and the man's face was black.

Just then Mr. Singleton was brought up, and Dr. Lay and some of the other gentlemen, and she lost the disgruntled couple.

Miss Abby was not a little surprised to find cultured speech and easy manners among the ladies to whom she was introduced, her mind being naturally a little prejudiced against "border ruffians." Unconsciously, she had

expected to find the term more technically descriptive than it seemed to be.

However, she met all their frank, cordial advances in the same spirit, so far as in her lay,—which, it must be confessed, was not very far; for she was incased in the slight, impervious shell of New England reserve, which they tried to get through—and could n't; which she tried to throw off—and could n't. But they found her ladylike, and that was the main thing; and she found that their sentences would parse, which was what she had been uneasy about; and so they got along. It is, perhaps, too much to expect that two sections as far apart in distance and sympathy as were Massachusetts and Missouri in that particular decade would do more than this.

"Gordon," said Mrs. Trevilian, as he helped her into the carriage, "you and Sallie come home with us to dinner. Aunt Viny is preparing for eight or ten, and we 've nobody but Mr. Singleton and Mr. Whalen. Mrs. Whalen is down in Lafayette."

"Thank you, m'm. I believe I will. There are some things I want to talk over with Beverly before we go, and Sallie is always ready."

A few moments later he was riding down the road (very, very slowly, so that the riding-skirt would not get splashed), talking some of them over with Beverly's sister.

On the way home the Trevilians were discussing the people Miss Abby had met.

"Who were the lady and gentleman that came up and then went away without being introduced?" asked Miss Abby.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Trevilian, in surprise. "Did anybody do that? I did n't see them. Do you know who it was, Nan?"

"Yes," returned Miss Nannie, composedly. "I saw them. It was the Tigermans."

"Why did n't you introduce them?"

"I did n't want to."

"Why, *Nan!*"

"Sister Bettie, you know the Tigermans had no business popping themselves up there to be introduced! They have no children old enough to go to school. And they are not friends of ours. They came because they saw other people doing it, and they wanted to push themselves in—nothing else in the world!"

"Oh, well, that kind of people I like to be specially polite to."

"And that kind of people I like to sit down on!" said Miss Nannie. "Besides, I don't want Miss Abby to take her opinion of the neighborhood from the Tigermans. They don't belong here, anyway."

It seemed rather strange to the New England teacher that everybody called her "Miss Abby." It seemed to be the way of the country.

"But, Nan, they will be sure to take offense."

"Of course!" said Miss Nannie, without much concern of soul. "The Tigermans *always* take offense. They are that kind of people!"

CHAPTER V

IN THE SCHOOL-HOUSE

WHEN they sat down to the table, Miss Abby gave an inward gasp at its prodigality. There was a turkey at one end; a baked ham, of the vintage of three years ago, at the other; a pair of ducks under "blankets" of flaky pie-crust midway of the table before Beverly; and, to balance it, a chicken-pie. It seemed to her like a veritable slaughter of the innocents. And as to the concomitants!—Miss Abby counted up to nine different vegetables and then stopped. Why, there was enough on that table to last an economical family for weeks!

While she was making this swift mental inventory, Colonel Trevilian and Beverly had fallen upon the fowls with deft hands, pink slices were issuing from under Mrs. Trevilian's sharp knife, and the girls were rallying Mr. Singleton on his encounter with Tommy Trawles.

"I really thought for a while that Tommy was coming out ahead, Mr. Singleton," laughed Virginia.

"Oh, he did—he did, undoubtedly. I am very sure none of you youngsters remember any of my points as well as you remember his. Tommy certainly has one qualification of a pulpit orator—he makes himself understood."

"Yes, he does n't lack clearness—or force," said Mrs. Trevilian.

"Nor pertinacity in holding to his point of view," added Gordon.

"And he carries his audience with him," Beverly put in, cutting carefully into the "blanket."

"Quite true, Beverly; quite true. I feel very certain that nobody in that church followed *me,* while Tommy was in competition, but old Uncle Adam. I know I did n't follow myself. My memory slipped a cog just as Tommy announced his complaint, and you were out of church five minutes too soon in consequence. I 'll get that five minutes back on you some day, Beverly."

The table grew hilarious at the remembrance of the scene, and the jests flew thick and fast, Sunday as it was. When they had laughed themselves out, and had settled down to the discussion of prospective patrons and pupils, Miss Abby asked:

"Who was the sweet-looking girl that sat in front of you, Miss Trevilian,—the one with the very fair complexion and golden hair? I think I noticed that she went out with an elderly man. She looks as if she might be one that would belong to me when school begins."

"It was Lois Chandler and her father. She *is* a pretty girl. It seems to me she gets prettier all the time. I could hardly keep my eyes off her to-day. Mr. Singleton, after all, there is nothing in the world so beautiful as fresh, blooming young girls, is there?"

"Nothing in the world, Miss Nannie," he said, with a significant glance that took in the auburn head and the dark one opposite—he had long been shepherd of this flock; "and"—sobered suddenly—"sometimes nothing so pathetic. They know so little of what is before them—so little of the pitfalls for unwary feet. . . . There is something about Lois Chandler's position among us that appeals to me."

"What, Mr. Singleton?" asked Virginia, in surprise.

"Well, my child,"—he stirred his coffee in a contemplative mood, as if he saw the blonde-haired girl and her past and future in its depths,—"principally the thing that can never come to you and Sallie—her isolation and

the lonely way in which she has been raised. It is not a good thing, Mrs. Trevilian,"—forgetting that he was addressing his remarks to Virginia,—" for a young girl to be raised by a man, and especially an old man."

" And more especially an old crank!" said Miss Nannie in a swift aside to Beverly, who sat next to her. But Beverly's eyes were on his father, who had spoken before Mrs. Trevilian could reply.

" I will answer that, Mr. Singleton," he said, with kindling eyes. " One who has been reared without the counsels of a mother such as Sallie and Virginia have, has missed God's best gift to a child."

Mrs. Trevilian's color rose, and she acknowledged the compliment by a deprecatory smile. " Lois is to be pitied," she said softly, " in that she is motherless. And she seems to be a sweet, simple-hearted child."

Beverly and Gordon were both looking straight into their plates. Virginia looked to see, and so did Sallie.

" Mr. Singleton, did you ever hear of our first acquaintance with old man Chandler?" asked Miss Nannie. The conversation seemed to be taking rather a sentimental turn. " Get brother William to tell you about it."

" It 's no story of mine," declared the Colonel. " I never have seen any special joke in it."

" Brother William, that is because it is on you. People never can see a point that is coming straight toward them as well as when they are a little at one side—in other words, when it is going toward somebody else."

" What is it, Miss Nannie?" inquired Mr. Whalen.

" Well, then: when the Chandlers first came here they settled on a poor little place down on the creek, and they had no orchard. We had plenty of fruit that fall, so brother William said that he thought he would send them over a few barrels of Genitins. But before he got at it, here came the Chandler boy one day with a meal-

sack and fifteen cents to buy a peck of apples—a *peck,* I want you to understand, Mr. Singleton. Of course brother William filled up the bag, and told the boy to tell his father he never sold fruit to a neighbor, but to send over and get all he wanted. Well, in about fifteen minutes here came the boy back with the apples and the message, rather stiffly delivered, that Mr. Chandler never begged fruit or anything else. And that was the beginning of the intimacy between the two families."

In the laugh that followed, Beverly took part with the rest, but it was in a perfunctory sort of way. He had often heard this story, and joined in harmless mirth at the old man's expense; but to-day, for some reason, it rasped his nerves to have old man Chandler's penuriousness impaled upon the point of Miss Nannie's sarcasm and held up to ridicule. It *was* a pitiful thing for a girl to have been so reared, as Mr. Singleton had said. He felt his heart warm to the minister. If Lois could only have had such influences around her as Sallie and Virginia had had,—he never had realized before how much that all was to a girl,—she might be—

"Beverly, I have asked you a question three times, and you have n't heard a word I 've said!"

"I *beg* your pardon, Sallie! I 'm getting very deaf in that ear. Ask me once more, and I 'll turn the other." And Sallie had no further cause to complain.

"And what was there wrong about his wanting to buy the peck of apples?" asked Miss Abby, leaning past the two and speaking with a puzzled air. It seemed to her that she had missed the point.

"Oh, nothing!" returned Miss Nannie; "nothing at all! Only men in this part of the country don't buy apples that way, and don't sell them at all unless they have a wagon-load or so."

"I want to know!" said Miss Abby.

And simultaneously four pairs of young eyes sought the turkey on their plates.

"He 's peculiar," said Colonel Trevilian. "He has n't a particle of tact. You remember, Mr. Whalen, his taking Mr. Pasco to task about leaving his machinery out in the field?—told him to his face that it was shiftless—shiftless in the extreme, was the way he put it. You know Pasco prides himself on his farming."

"That was rather amusing," replied Mr. Whalen, with a chuckle; "especially considering the two farmers, Colonel."

"Yes, sir, yes." And they laughed heartily. They did not explain the difference, but Miss Abby rightly conjectured that one was successful, and the other was not.

When there was a moment of silence, she broke it by asking, with pedagogic directness:

"And don't you think it *is* shiftless to leave machinery out?"

They found later that she never failed to have a question or a remark to drop into the conversation when it began to bubble. They were always eminently practical and to the point, but they never failed to precipitate the solution.

After dinner the young people went out to the school-house, which had been treated to a fresh coat of whitewash and a new blackboard in honor of Miss Abby. Sallie opened her eyes at seeing on the table the hour-glass and the big globe that had never before left Colonel Trevilian's office. He had himself transferred them to the school-house, with a natural desire to let the new teacher from the North see that they were quite up to date on the border in the matter of equipment.

They dropped into the same seats they used to occupy

—Sallie and Virginia together, with Gordon behind them and Beverly alone on the other side.

"Sallie, come over here! I'm lonesome."

"A-ha! you miss the young lady with the golden hair, do you?"

"Yes," replied Beverly. "And in default of her, I'll take the young lady with the r—auburn hair. No! Don't sit in front of me. Sit by me. It is your last chance. . . . You won't, won't you?"

He gave his desk a whirl, and Sallie went shrieking into the aisle, for the Trevilian school-house seats were rude wooden ones, each a part of the desk behind, and not screwed down. The occupants were thus entirely at the mercy of their neighbors in the rear, and sometimes it had proved the tender mercies of the wicked. They would find themselves often, in the midst of study, unexpectedly swept into the aisle by impatient or mischievous hands, and, as in the instinctive working of that law which is said to be nature's very first they invariably clutched the desk in front as they went, the hapless possessor of that in turn would be thrust into the opposite aisle. So those old desks kept up a zigzag that varied the monotony of school life immensely.

It had been an old trick of Beverly's to set that ball rolling. He played the trick once too often, though; for Miss Lavinia saw him, and the next day the seats were changed, the boys now alternating with the girls, who would presumably keep them straight. This brought Virginia and Sallie in front of Gordon, and Beverly on the other side, behind a girl with flowing yellow hair, who always sat alone.

Nobody in the back of the room seemed to mind the change,—and Beverly least of all. If Miss Lavinia had meant this for a punishment, she had underestimated the age of her pupils. Beverly had never been so near the

yellow-haired girl before. How like a rose-leaf her cheek was! And her hair was like spun gold! Why did n't the girls play with her, he wondered, or choose her in the spelling-match.

"What are you girls going to study?" asked Gordon when quiet was restored and Sallie had capitulated by sitting beside Beverly.

"Paley's 'Natural Theology,' Alexander's 'Evidences of Christianity,' and somebody's 'Mental Philosophy'—I forget whose."

"Whew-w-w!"

There was a wailing whistle. Then Beverly rose, placed his hand on his heart, and made a low bow—first to one, and then to the other.

"Ladies, you have made a wise choice! These studies will fit you most beautifully for social life in Richmond and Lexington, where, I understand, you expect to shine next year. But"—with anxious inquiry—"are you in doubt about Christianity, may I ask?"

"Oh, brother! All the girls study 'Evidences of Christianity' in their senior year; and, I thank you, we are seniors, if we *don't* go to college, for next year we stop."

"Ah! and who are the other seniors that next year are going to stop?"

"There 's nobody but Sallie and Mollie Driscoll and myself, of the girls."

"By the way," said Gordon, "does anybody ever see anything of Rene Taggart nowadays?" and there was a peal of laughter without apparent cause.

"I 'm like you, Gordon. I never hear of Mollie Driscoll without thinking of Rene Taggart. Did n't she give it to Mollie that day! Je-*mi*my! I bet Mollie never has thrown it up to another girl that she was poor white folks!"

"It served her right," said Gordon, sternly. "She

had no business to say it. It changed that child's whole life. She was a bright little thing, if she was a Taggart, and she was trying so hard to be like the rest of you girls and make something of herself."

"It was too bad," said Virginia. "She never has been to school a day since."

"You made a friend that day, Gordon," said Beverly. "They say the Taggarts never forget."

"I 'm thinking I made an enemy, too," Gordon returned with a smile. "Mollie Driscoll will hardly speak to me yet. If she ever gets a chance to do me a bad turn—"

"But was n't Rene game!" interrupted Beverly, with reminiscent admiration. "She never shed a tear through the whole thing, while Mollie blubbered like a baby."

Which was all he knew about it. The haw-bush could have told a different tale. It was a pitiful little story—for all their merriment over it—and is worth telling, perhaps, if only to show how quickly a flickering flame of aspiration can be put out. Then, too, it may have been the primal cause of something that happened one dark night on Grand Prairie long afterward. Perhaps nobody ever connected the two, but the hidden springs of life sometimes lie very far from the spot where they emerge as deeds.

Rene had been one of the few "creek folks" that patronized the Trevilian school, and she had never gone until that time four years ago—the last year before the boys went away to college. She had gone steadily then until Mollie Driscoll told her one day that she was "poor white folks."

"I dare you to say that again!" Rene had challenged, with eyes flashing and fingers that tingled for the touch of hair.

And Mollie could not take a dare. There was where the trouble came in.

"It 's good enough for you, Mollie Driscoll!" Gordon Lay had said indignantly when the girl who was n't "poor white folks" emerged, with bleeding nose and disheveled hair and garments that told of the conflict, from under the hands of the one who was. "You had no business to say it!"

Rene was standing motionless, her nostrils dilated, her breath coming hard. She was watching every movement of her antagonist like a cat ready to spring.

"I 'll say it if I want to," blubbered Mollie, goaded past common prudence by Gordon's scorn. "It 's so, anyway!"

And in an instant the battle was on again.

They were parted at last, the girls taking Mollie to the pump, while Rene with white face and blazing eyes stood facing Miss Lavinia.

"It was n't her fault, Miss Lavinia," Gordon had hastened to say. "Mollie made her do it. I saw the whole thing."

He was almost a man in size then, though he was not much over sixteen, and she was a child of thirteen. He stooped and brushed the dust from her dress. Love of fair play had always been strong in Gordon.

"Go to your seat, Irene," Miss Lavinia had said, not unkindly, "I will talk with you about this after school."

She did not have the opportunity. Rene walked straight into the school-room, packed up her belongings, and vaulted through the window before Miss Lavinia had finished hearing the story from the excited children. Her school-days were over.

The girl's way home lay through the pasture back of the house which led down to the creek. She had looked neither to the right nor the left until she was safe behind the shelter of a clump of haw-bushes. Then she threw

herself on the ground, and wept it out in an agony of humiliation and fierce grief and anger.

They do not know the human heart who speak lightly of childish sorrows. It is true they are evanescent, but for intensity of suffering and blackness of despair there is nothing in later years to approach them. When time has taught us the truth, we know that nothing lasts; but at thirteen we are sure that we will stagger under this load forever. Poor Rene! By the time she had reached the sobbing stage, she saw that the case was quite hopeless. She could never, never go back.

The neighborhood had wondered a little when she started, in the first place. It was something new for a Taggart to show any desire to climb—anything less material, at any rate, than the creek banks and the walnut-trees. They did this fearlessly enough, girl and boys alike; but otherwise the ways of the Taggarts were usually down.

The child had had one heavenly glimpse of a different life during those months at the Keswick school. She found herself trying to be like the rest. She braided her hair as Virginia did, and when Sallie Devereau came out one day in hoops, Rene got a grape-vine and ran it in the hem of her petticoat. It was rather stiff and thumped a good deal when she sat down, but it was much better than no hoops, she thought.

That there was a difference between her and the rest of the girls Rene saw all too plainly. She did not try to bridge the gulf, and neither, it must be confessed, did they—being full of themselves and the unconscious selfishness of youth.

There had been one day, though, when she had seemed just like the rest—a day that stood out in her memory as the one in which for one brief space she entered paradise. It was the time they were playing "plate," and the boys,

instigated by Gordon, had made her a "belle." Gordon had thought it was too bad for her to be so left out,—and the boys took their cue from him. She had never had such a heavenly time.

The girl sobbing under the haw-bush was thinking of that day with the rest. And it was all over! There was a fresh burst of weeping at that, and sobbing, and then the dull ache about the throat that we all can remember, no matter how far we have got from the haw-bush. But through the shame and the hurt and the despair—so strange a thing is a girl's heart!—there had been a throbbing note of joy.

"He stood up for me!" it said. "Gordon stood up for me!"

Poor Rene!

"VIRGINIA," said Beverly in the first pause (for they had been full of laughter and chat while we have been following Rene's little story), "who was that fellow that stared you out of countenance in church to-day? The one that sat over by the wall."

Virginia looked annoyed.

"I suppose you mean that horrid old Emmons Baird. I hate that man! He stares at me so that I always feel as if something was the matter with me—that my hair was coming down, or I had too much starch on my face, or something. I put my hand up a half-dozen times this morning to see if my hair-pins were coming out. Did you see anything wrong about me?" she demanded of Gordon, raising to him a face that Emmons Baird might well be forgiven for feasting his eyes upon.

"No," he returned gravely, his lips twitching a little. "I didn't see anything wrong about you. I don't see anything wrong now."

"Well, if I were going to be here," Beverly said sav-

agely, "I would make him understand that he had to look at old Mrs. McTavish next Sunday, or somebody else! Who is he, anyway? Has he come here lately?"

"He lives down here on the old Baskin place—he's nothing but a renter, they say. He doesn't look to me as if he ever *owned* anything, though I believe he did buy old Uncle Bob and Aunt Cindy at Mr. Baskin's sale. There are two of these Bairds—this Emmons and another one named Jim."

"Where did they come from?"

"They claim to be Virginians. But I don't believe they ever set foot on Virginia soil, myself," said this loyal namesake of the Old Dominion. "This Emmons Baird was over here one day, and Aunt Nan says he got awfully tangled up in the counties."

"Dreadful!" said Beverly, in mock consternation. "I know that finished him with Aunt Nan. She thinks if a fellow can't tell off the counties of Virginia as he would the multiplication-table he has pretty nearly lost his chance of being counted with the elect."

"Well, not so bad as that, brother; but certainly his chance of being numbered with the F. F. V.'s. That was the day Miss Tiny and Miss Tony were here, and Miss Tiny began to question him about the Bairds in Virginia that she had known. She seemed deeply impressed when he said he belonged to that family, but she lost her faith when he couldn't tell his grandmother's name. She said to me, privately, after he was gone, 'He may be all right, child, but I always have my doubts of a man that can't tell his great-grandmother's name before she was married. I do, indeed!'"

There was hilarious laughter at this, for Virginia had the gift of mimicry, and Miss Tiny was a good subject.

"How long has he been here?" asked Gordon. He, too, felt an interest in the man which was antagonistic.

"They came here about a year and a half ago, I have heard father say, but I never saw them till last spring. Did you, Sallie? There seems something mysterious about them. Father says they never went anywhere at all when they first came into the neighborhood,—not even to the store. They always sent old Uncle Bob. Lately they have been coming to church, and mother thinks we ought to speak to them and sort of encourage them."

"It strikes me this one needs discouraging," said Gordon.

"Oh, Gordon! not about coming to church! But I 'm not going to talk to him. He comes over here to see father sometimes, and we have to be polite to him. But I don't like his looks myself."

"Neither do I," said Beverly, rising. "You 'd better let mother do the encouraging. You study Christianity and let her practise it. Come on, folks; let 's all go down to the grape-vine tree."

As they were starting, Virginia heard her mother calling her.

"*You*-all go on," she said. "I 'll be there in a minute."

"I 'll wait for you here," said Gordon.

When she was gone he sat staring at the blank walls, which seemed blanker than ever, suddenly. There were no grateful green boards then for tired eyes to rest upon, no bright-tinted maps, no pictures to relieve the staring whiteness.

None?

Well, perhaps we might except the two great panels on the side, framed by the window-casings, to which Gordon turned to-day, as he had so often done in the years gone by. There Nature hung each day a fresh canvas. On it were limitless expanses of shaded greens and gorgeous Western skies such as no lesser artist would dare to paint, and a restless ocean whose grassy billows rose and

fell with every passing breeze, and took on the shifting lights and shades and shimmer of the sea.

There was no lack of variety in those paneled scenes, either in subject or coloring. Sometimes, as to-day, it was a pastoral in green; sometimes, a landscape in sober browns, lit up by the scarlet of the sumac and the hickory's gold; some days the world was in a winding-sheet of white.

There was so much more in the picture than met the eye. Gordon could see from where he sat the curling smoke of his own home, over there where the woods dipped down to the creek. He knew every foot of that creek bank. In the spring days he and Beverly, Virginia and Sallie, "they four and no more," used to scour those woods for red-buds and dogwood and service-berries, which they ate with endless discussions, that he smiled to recall, as to whether it was service or *sarvice*.

Then there had been the earlier tramps which necessitated the girls wearing their "gum-shoes,"—when the sap began to flow and the grape-vine's blood must be caught in tin buckets to use later in the mysteries of the feminine shampoo. In the fall those old grape-vines enticed them again, and the boys climbed to perilous heights and threw down the luscious clusters into the girls' outstretched skirts, and they all sought the gnarled old trunk that had served them so well, and served them still, with outspread seats just large enough for four.

There were pawpaws and black haws and hickory-nuts in those woods; and later on, when the frost had laid its withering touch on all else, the defiant persimmon, which, like some hearts, needs this sharp touch to turn its acrid juices to sweet succulence and use; and the vicious little winter grapes, which even the frost could not more than half subdue, but which were vicious to the last, and puckered the mouth, and made one shut his eyes and shiver

and feel that he had suddenly developed mumps. All these Gordon saw in the picture.

Over the rise, between Colonel Trevilian's and Dr. Lay's, ran the road—the "big road" it was always called. It looked to-day like a tawny ribbon laid over that cloth of green. Sometimes it was lost for a space, but it would bob up again somewhere else, and the ox-teams that had been lost would emerge from the "sink" in which they had been swallowed up.

The young man in the school-house was under Memory's spell. He almost expected to see the prairie-schooner with its tow-headed youngsters peering out from every opening, the household gods swinging below, and the sad-eyed yellow dog guarding them. This had been the supreme excitement of their childish life. He could see once more the rising along the line of boys, and hear the thrilling whisper pass from one to another, "Movers! movers!"

But the smile faded from his lips. Those old pictures had made his heart tender to-day. Would it ever again be just the same? A vague depression that he could not throw off had fallen upon him. He rose and stood by the open window, drawing in a great breath. Would this cataclysm that his father feared for the country really come upon it? They had had stirring times on the border already. Who was this mysterious avenger or assassin, or whatever he was, who had been dealing out death with such a relentless hand across the Kaw? Suppose he should come over the line. He shivered. All he held dear was on this border, and he was leaving it. Then with sudden wrath he thought of the man who had dared to look at Virginia with covetous eyes that day.

There was a step, a vision in the doorway, a voice,—and the sun shone.

"What are you looking at, Gordon?"

"The shadows."

She stood beside him, and together they looked out over the peaceful scene—the shady vales, the uplands basking in the sunshine, the floating fleecy clouds that cast their shadows on meadows primeval where cattle stood knee-deep in the lush grass and ate their fill—shadows that shifted and darkened and melted away as they looked—that dropped down here, and lifted there, and chased each other over the sun-kissed plain till it seemed that they were playing hide-and-seek with the very god of day.

Gordon had called Virginia's attention to this panorama of cloud shadows one day, long years ago, as they stood together at this very window. After that they somehow felt that it was theirs by right of discovery. They never spoke of it to anybody else; they kept it to themselves—one of Nature's sweet secrets that she had told to them alone. To-day, as they stood side by side and watched it for the last time, their souls were flooded with the sweet ecstasy of it all, and the haunting, elusive undertone of sadness that always comes with Nature's masterpieces.

Ah, the beautiful play of lights and shades on virgin meadows!

"Of course you 'll write to me, Sallie?"

CHAPTER VI

TWO AND TWO ARE FIVE

THE boys were off bright and early the next morning —Virginia and Sallie going with them in the carriage, under Uncle Reuben's guardianship, as far as the landing.

Colonel Trevilian had intended going too on his gray horse, but at the last moment he was called away on urgent business in another direction. There seemed likely to be a hitch in the plans for a while, but Virginia had pleaded:

"Oh, mother! it 's all planned! and Sallie will be so disappointed! and so will Matt Delano, for we were going to stop there for dinner, and take her down to the boat with us. Now, mother, *please!* Uncle Reuben will take good care of us. *Father!*"

That last appeal won the day, as it had since she was old enough to put her arms around his neck and say in just this tone, "Now, fä-ver!"

"Oh, yes, my dear, I think they may as well go. Mr. Delano will ride down from Independence to the boat with them."

And Virginia flew up-stairs to get ready.

Miss Abby was a good deal scandalized---on two counts: First, they would be absent from the opening of school, which seemed to her far more important than any mere leave-taking; and, second, they would have to ride back all that distance alone with this old negro. She spoke of this to Miss Nannie.

"Afraid to have them go with Uncle Reuben!" exclaimed Miss Nannie. "Why, he is as trustworthy as the Apostle Paul! He has driven these children around ever since they were born, and their father and grandfather before them. Mercy! . . . Uncle Reuben!"

The ride to Independence was a long one, but it seemed all too short to-day. It was likely to be the last one they would take together for a good while.

The roads had dried up, the day was fine, and Sallie was never in higher spirits,—which is saying a great deal, for Sallie's spirits were of the effervescing type. She and Beverly kept things going; and it was well they did, for Gordon was rather quiet and Virginia's gaiety intermittent.

Once Sallie got out to get some flowers, of which the prairie was full, and Beverly followed her to see that she did not get left, he said, or snake-bitten, and they could hear her shrieks as he laid this danger forcibly before her. Gordon moved across to the place beside Virginia. But when he was there and the opportunity had come for confidential talk he could think of nothing but commonplaces to say—and the time so short! When the train is coming and we stand on the platform and know that in a moment our chance will be gone, and that when it is we shall think of a hundred things that we wanted to say, our brains seem palsied and all we can think of is "Be sure to write" and "Did you get everything?"

Gordon could not tell her all the things that clamored for utterance. There was not time, and this was not the place. Besides, he had but little of the small change of conversation, and when he thought of nothing worth while to say, said it. A strange constraint had fallen upon Virginia too, and when they did talk it did not seem altogether satisfactory.

Outside, on the prairie, Beverly was saying, "Of course you 'll write to me, Sallie?"

"I don't know," Sallie returned teasingly; "you write to me, and *maybe* I 'll answer."

"Humph! *Maybe* I 'll write!" said Beverly.

Sallie laughed and then said seriously, "Beverly Trevilian, you know you don't care for my letters. You would rather have two pages from Lois Chandler than ten from me. Now, honest—would n't you?"

Beverly caught her hands and held them.

"Sallie," he said solemnly, "let me look into your eyes. I think I caught the reflection of the prairie—just the least little speck of it."

But Sallie had turned her eyes away.

"Everybody can see it but Virginia," she said.

"Sallie, you are talking nonsense! What could Lois Chandler ever be to me?" He spoke impatiently, but as if his impatience were more at a situation than at her.

"I 'm sure she 's a very nice girl," said Sallie, with a woman's contrariety. Then she laughed. "Beverly, it is so funny! Virginia thinks Gordon likes Lois. And I half-way think so myself."

He turned quickly toward her. "You do! Pshaw!"

"Well, I said half-way. You need n't look at me like that!"

When they reached the carriage, which had stopped at their call, Gordon kept his seat.

"Sallie, you are not old enough to have conscientious scruples about riding backward, are you?" He found his *place* satisfactory, at any rate.

"Gordon, I am devoted to you. I would strangle any scruple that would not give you the opportunity of looking forward," she said, settling herself beside Beverly.

At Independence they had a disappointment. Matt Delano had other company and was not able to go down to

the boat with them; but Mr. Delano dropped everything to ride down with them on horseback and see the boys off, as Colonel Trevilian had requested.

Their good-bys were spoken at the gangway,—Gordon whispering hurriedly as he held her hand, "Will you write to me, Virge?" and Virginia answering quietly, "Yes." Sallie threw parting jests to the last. Then the plank was drawn in, the boys disappeared and reappeared on the guards, the churning of brown waters began, hats were lifted from two handsome heads, two white hands were waved from the shore, there was a hearty "Good luck to you, boys!"—and they were off.

The girls did not look at each other till they had said good-by to Mr. Delano and were in the carriage. As they started, Virginia leaned forward to give some direction to Uncle Reuben. When she turned toward her friend, a shocked expression came over her face.

"Why, Sallie!" she cried. "Sallie!"

For Sallie was lying in an ignominious heap in the corner of the carriage, shaken with sobs.

"I know just how you feel," said Virginia, with consummate tact, and an ominous heaving of her own breast. "I feel that same way about brother, and Gordon is just like a brother to you."

On the *Thomas H. Benton* the two young men were stowing away their belongings in their state-rooms and preparing for the journey, which, even with clear sailing, would be like an ocean passage of to-day for length. If they struck a sand-bar there was no telling when it would end.

They sat out late that night on the guards, watching the endless processions of trees—willows and cottonwoods and sycamores—pass by in ghostly file, dreaming young men's dreams of the future, and planning their

lives with as much confidence as if there were no unknown factors to deal with.

"You will get through in two years?" Beverly was saying.

"Yes."

"And then?"

"Well, I rather think I 'll settle in Kansas City, if it is large enough by that time to support another physician. Father thinks it is going to make quite a town. You never had any leaning toward medicine."

"No, *sir*. When I come back for good, it will be to take up life at Keswick. I think it would break father's heart if I should do anything else. You see, the Trevilians have been planters in Virginia from time immemorial, and I suppose I have a sort of inherited love of the soil. I 'm going to be a planter in Missouri, only it won't be tobacco alone that I 'll plant, and I will probably be called by the less high-sounding name of farmer. Still, with the two thousand acres that will be mine some day, I think I might almost be called a planter."

It was of their prospects they talked, of establishing themselves, of prosaic plans for making a livelihood; but they were verging upon manhood's estate, and who can doubt that mingled with their thoughts of drugs and crops were dreams of fair faces and bright eyes? Eden was incomplete until woman came. She brought trouble with her, it is true, as she has brought it ever since; but she was fair to look upon, and from that time to this, when Adam's sons have planted them gardens they have not had the resolution to shut her out.

So Gordon's thoughts were of Virginia, and the heir of Keswick's with—

"Beverly," said Gordon, breaking a silence that had lasted long, "you placed me in a very uncomfortable position the other day. Did you know it?"

"No." Beverly lifted his eyes from the contemplation of the flashing spray of the side-wheel to look in genuine surprise at his companion. "When?"

"The day you left Virginia thinking I had been walking down in the woods with Lois Chandler. She—"

"Was n't that funny!" broke in Beverly, with a laugh. "Do you know, I believe she had a sort of suspicion that she was wrong, for she asked me at supper-time where I was that morning."

"What did you tell her?"

"Told her I was out hunting, as I was. She thought it took me all morning to get those few prairie-chickens, I suppose." And he laughed again.

"I don't see anything very funny about it," Gordon said with uncompromising gravity. "I wish you would look at it seriously. I could n't tell her the truth, because I had promised you not to, but I tell you I did n't like the position it placed me in."

"Oh," said Beverly, lightly, "she 'll never think of it again."

"She will think of it. She asked me again to-day, when you and Sallie were getting the flowers, if it was Lois I was walking with that morning. The very fact that I don't tell her naturally makes her think there 's something wrong—something I 'm keeping back. . . . I think you ought to have told her."

"Oh, Gordon, you don't know what wrath I would have brought down on my poor head. Father won't hear to my looking at a girl who has n't a pedigree as long as the moral law—and mother is n't much better! I would n't quite say that they think it a crime for a person not to have a grandfather and a great-grandfather—perhaps not even a misdemeanor—but an indiscretion, certainly. These old Virginia families have tar-bucket memories,—and they always want to look it up in the

herd-book. Confound it! why is it that the prettiest girls never had any pedigree? And the ugly ones! There 's Mollie Driscoll, now. Counts back to the time of the flood,—a little before, I believe,—and who would ever want to go with Mollie Driscoll! Let her keep the company of her antediluvian ancestors, I say!"

Gordon was not to be diverted. "I wish you would absolve me from my promise," he said soberly. "I ought never to have made it, in the first place."

"No, sir!" Beverly shook his head in a tantalizing way, but there was an undercurrent of purpose beneath the light words. "I hold you to that promise. You said, upon honor, that you would never tell until I said you might, and I won't release you from it. You are never to let on in any manner that I have ever been in the habit of going down to old man Chandler's. You 've promised! . . . Besides, Gordon," he continued in expostulation, "you know it is all in fun. There can never be anything serious between Lois Chandler and me! Why, it is ridiculous!"

Gordon Lay pushed his chair back and stood up as if to end the conversation.

"Then drop it!" he said roughly. "And drop it now! If you are not in earnest, stand aside and let some honest fellow go in that is! An affair of this sort, that can neither be carried on in the open nor be treated seriously, will lead to no good."

He left him as abruptly as he had spoken. It was the nearest approach to a quarrel the two had ever had.

Beverly turned and looked after him—amazement in every feature. "Well, by Jove!" he said, "I half-way believe Sallie is right! Who is the honest fellow that wants to go in in earnest? . . . Can it be himself?"

He sat there late into the night, looking at the white spray as it fell from the wheel, and thinking—no, not

quite thinking, but letting his thoughts stray whithersoever they would. And they strayed oftenest to the humble house where sweet-faced Lois Chandler lived alone with her "peculiar" father. The girl was wonderfully pretty. And she was good too. If she only had a pedigree! . . . The white spray still dashed from the wheel. There was a fascination in watching it. How pure it was! How it flashed in the starlight! And how irretrievably it was lost when it touched the black vortex below!

"I don't know but he is right," he thought. "I 'm glad I am going away. She 'll forget me before I get back, and maybe I 'll forget her—I hope so, anyway."

And then a vision flitted before him of Lois Chandler's blue eyes, in which there had been just a hint of tears when he saw them last; and the golden hair which fell about her face in such profusion and had somehow enmeshed itself about his heart; and the soft cheek that was like a rose-leaf;—and he was not sure that he wanted to be quite forgotten, after all.

CHAPTER VII

MISS ABBY ON DOMESTIC ECONOMY

IT was November—the season when the wise woman who looketh well to the ways of her household, and is not afraid of the snow, must be up and doing in old Missouri, for that household was literally to be clothed in scarlet.

The ladies were all seated one day in Mrs. Trevilian's room, which looked like an Oriental bazaar with its gay plaid linseys covering every available space. Mrs. Trevilian sat by the bed, cutting out the women's winter dresses, and Miss Nannie's deft fingers were rapidly transforming them into garments.

There was an open fire in the room, and Miss Abby sat in front of it, doing her Saturday's darning—an onerous task for her hands, which were better trained to the pen than to the needle. She felt almost dizzy at the rapidity with which work was being turned off to-day by these experienced seamstresses.

Miss Abby had settled down into the most comfortable relations with the Trevilian family, in spite of widely differing ways. She had actually learned to lie in bed and have her fire made,—so seductive are luxurious habits, even to those born of Puritan stock and brought up on the east wind.

The school was well started—not without some few tilts between teacher and patrons, it is true—and was progressing finely. Miss Abby had wanted to start a class in physiology, which was vetoed by the mothers, who said

that physiology might be well enough for boys, perhaps, but it was certainly indelicate for girls. They had them take instead geography of the heavens, as being more practical, and Grecian mythology as less likely to corrupt the imagination.

"Nan," said Mrs. Trevilian, unrolling a bundle of blue jeans, "see if you can find me Uncle Reuben's coat pattern. It is marked with his name."

Miss Abby looked up in astonishment. "You don't tell me you make the men's clothes too?"

"Why, of course," returned Mrs. Trevilian. "Who else would make them?"

"Don't the women sew at all?"

"They do their mending. But they could n't really be expected to make their clothes. They have their other work to do."

Miss Abby sniffed.

"I know you think they don't work very hard, Miss Abby,—but there 's Ca'line, now. She does all the washing for the family, with Liz's help,—and the ironing. What time would she have to sew?"

"Plenty of time," said Miss Abby, severely. She had made a number of observations since she had been on this easy-going farm, and one of them was that there was a great waste of time as well as other things—a sinful waste, she called it. She had long wanted an opportunity to express her mind about it. "Caroline could do the washing and ironing in two days—three at most. My mother used to do the washing for a family of nine and get it out by ten o'clock. I 've heard her say often that she would feel disgraced to hang out a washing after dinner. All her work was done up in the forenoon."

"What time did she get up?" asked Miss Nannie.

"At four o'clock—on wash-days—winter and summer. Had to, to get it done by ten."

"Was there any law requiring it to be done by ten?"

"It was the custom of the country," said Miss Abby, shortly. She did not like Miss Nannie's satirical air.

"Well, sister Bettie, suppose we adopt that custom," suggested Miss Nannie, blandly. "It would probably keep you awake the best part of the night, and it would rout brother William out to wake Ca'line, and she would rouse the rest of the family rummaging around for the clothes,—but it might end in her getting *started* by ten o'clock! That would be something gained. Did you ever try to hurry a darky, Miss Abby?"

"No," said Miss Abby, with significant emphasis. "Thank God, I 've never had anything to do with them! But—"

"I thought not!" interpolated Miss Nannie.

"—I can see no reason why they should not be trained to habits of system and the economical use of time, the same as anybody else. I am sure, Mrs. Trevilian, that my mother could get three times as much out of these negroes as you do."

"I don't doubt it," returned Mrs. Trevilian, dryly. "It was a well-known fact in Virginia that the Northern overseers got more work out of the negroes than anybody else —and were harder on them. You can easily see why. It was not that they were more hard-hearted. They simply expected them to do as much work as white men, and Southern people never expect that. They know them too well."

"I think it ought to be expected. It is no kindness to let them dawdle over their work."

It is not surprising that Miss Abby thought they dawdled over their work. They certainly did. As one looks back upon it now, it seems strange how they ever kept up a pretense of being busy; for, with so many to do the work, there was a minute subdivision of labor in those

homes that would have been amusing to a brisk New England housekeeper accustomed, as Miss Abby had said, to getting her work done up in the forenoon, if she had not from long habit shut her eyes to all but the darker, sadder side.

How to keep them busy was really a problem, and the question that Mrs. Trevilian put now to Miss Abby was the key-note to the difficulty.

"What would Ca'line do the rest of the week if I insisted on her finishing by Wednesday?"

"She might learn to sew." Miss Abby laid down her work and assumed her argumentative expression. She was on her native heath when arguing.

"But if she does the laundry work, that is enough for her to do. It is her part."

"It is a very small part of what an energetic New England woman would do," said Miss Abby. She still felt that these people did not know what a real day's work was.

"I suppose so," returned Mrs. Trevilian, quietly; "but if we should work our negroes as hard as the New England women work themselves, you would have reason to abuse us."

"Well," urged Miss Abby, "if they worked faster they could get through and have some time to rest."

"But they would rather take their rest as they go along. And why not?"

"It is a waste of time," declared the New England woman. "I think we will be held accountable for that as well as for a waste of other things."

What things she did not say. She shut her lips firmly together, lest they should release what was behind them. The truth was that the prodigality of this household was almost more than she could see go by unrebuked. Why, they sometimes ate six chickens a day—nine, Miss Nan-

nie had told her, when they first began to use them: three broiled for breakfast, three fried for dinner, and three smothered for supper. Such wasteful extravagance! Why did n't they wait till the chickens were full grown before they began eating them? She had asked Mrs. Trevilian one day how many she raised. "About five hundred," she had replied, and then to Miss Abby's remark that they must bring her in quite a sum, had added in surprise, "Oh, we never sell any. We raise them entirely for our own use. But we have a good deal of company."

Then there were the cows. Miss Abby had counted them one day when the women were milking. Thirteen! And they never sold a pound of butter! She had spoken to Mrs. Trevilian about that one day too. My! If her father had those thirteen cows, how much he would make from them! But Mrs. Trevilian had only said: "No, we never sell any. Aunt Viny does n't like to be stinted, and neither do we. My family like butter better than anything that butter will buy."

"But thirteen cows!" Miss Abby had gasped. "I should think—"

"Of course we give about half the milk to the calves," explained the beleaguered housekeeper, driven to it to explain her ways to this stern economist; "and we use a great deal of cream."

"We give our calves skim milk," suggested Miss Abby.

"Well, we don't." It was spoken as curtly as it was in this well-balanced lady to speak. The truth is, nobody likes to have her own particular faults of management made matters of astonished comment, even by those who can manage better.

Miss Abby used to walk around and mentally estimate what this thing and that—sacrificed so needlessly here—would bring in Boston. The apples, for instance. Why,

there were barrels and barrels of them going to waste! She could not forbear speaking of it one day. Mrs. Trevilian had said:

"Why, we have enough to last us as long as they will keep. The apple-holes are full, and we have dried them and made apple-butter." It did seem to her that they were blameless on the apple question.

But Miss Abby had persisted. "Could n't you find a market for them in Kansas City?"

"Oh, we never sell them," was the reply. "Mr. Trevilian has n't time to bother with a few bushels of apples. Besides, the hogs eat them."

It seemed to Miss Abby that the waste of time on this place was after the same pattern. She returned to it now.

"If they should work more expeditiously," she said with some hesitation,—she felt a little in doubt herself about the propriety of what she was about to say, and still more as to how it would be taken,—"they would have time for something else besides work—reading, for instance."

"But who would have time to teach them?" asked Mrs. Trevilian. "Nan and I are busy making their clothes and attending to those that are sick. Virginia did try once. She and Liz had a great time of cleaning out the hen-house and fixing it up for a school for the little negroes. Do you remember it, Nan? But she soon got tired of it."

"You can't teach them," said Miss Nannie. "They have n't the minds that white people have."

"I should like to try it," said Miss Abby, firmly. "You can never make me believe that the Almighty made human beings and left out the brains!"

"You may try it," said Mrs. Trevilian, promptly. "You can take them any time you want to. Of course you would have to teach the men at night."

Miss Abby was thunderstruck.

"Do you mean it?" she gasped. Here was the opportunity that of all things she had longed for. She could not believe that it had actually come. How her father would rejoice that it had been given to her to minister to these poor thirsting souls!

"Is n't there a law against teaching the slaves?" she asked.

"I really don't know whether there is in this State or not. There is in the South, but nobody pays any attention to it. It is simply a precautionary law. We can do as we please with our own servants. But the law is made so that if anybody should come down here and attempt to make trouble in that way, he could be stopped."

Miss Abby was amazed. "I never had thought of it in that way," she mused thoughtfully. "I always supposed it was a criminal offense for anybody to teach them anything."

"Not at all. It is difficult, but not criminal. You are welcome to try it—if you can get them to come."

"I imagine there will be no trouble about that," said Miss Abby.

Miss Nannie raised her eyebrows and smiled.

No time was lost in getting the new project on foot. Colonel Trevilian was consulted and gave prompt consent. He even suggested the use of the loom-room, now unoccupied, for the new school-house—the "Loom-house Academy," Miss Nannie christened it, and Virginia rummaged the attic for old "first readers."

The little negroes were jubilant at the thought of having a school of their own, supposing it would make them white; and the men looked foolish and joked over it, but were willing to try. But Miss Abby felt pained at heart by the apathy of the women. She could not understand

their indifference when such a vital point as their education was at stake.

Perhaps Mammy voiced the trend of feminine sentiment more clearly than anybody else.

"Mammy," asked Miss Nannie, affably, a few days later, "are you going to attend the Loom-house Academy?"

"No'm, I ain't!" said Mammy, with decision. "She ain't give me nothin' sence she 's been hyeah!"

CHAPTER VIII

A SPIRITED MAIDEN

VIRGINIA TREVILIAN, in her becoming riding-habit and jaunty cap, was riding at a leisurely gait along the road that led from Dr. Lay's to Keswick. In her lap was a bundle which explained her errand, but whose dog-eared contents could never have been guessed from its neat exterior.

With the same enthusiasm that had engineered a chicken funeral or a baptizing in her youthful days, Virginia had undertaken to provide books for the Loomhouse Academy. She had ransacked the garret and bookcase at home for old primers, spelling-books, readers, and whatever else had the alphabet in it,—and most books had in those days,—and this afternoon she and Sallie had done the same thorough job at Dr. Lay's.

She must have been pleased with the result, for she was smiling to herself at that—or something. It was probably *something,* for that search among the old books with Gordon Lay's name in them had brought vividly to mind the days gone by, when they had measured the flight of time by the page of Webster's spelling-book, and the height of their attainments by the reader they were in.

Those old books had a good deal of scribbling in them, she found,—a large part of it hers,—and she was thinking that she would look them over to-night with an eraser before they were put into circulation. Miss Abby might get hold of them. Old school-books tell so much more than their authors ever dreamed of.

Sallie had shown her a letter from Gordon, and there had been in it a note to herself which she had slipped in her bosom, forgetting she had a pocket. She was trying to recall the exact words of something in that note. Twice she started to take it from its hiding-place, and each time she stopped.

"I won't! I 'll wait till I get down to the old grape-vine tree," she told herself. That was where she always read her letters from him. He was getting along finely at Transylvania, he wrote, but he missed the prairie.

Just as she had reached this decision for the second time, a slight sound came to her ears and she looked back. A man on a white horse was emerging from the timber that she had just passed through.

With a quick frown she gave Rob Roy's bridle the jerk that started him into a rack. She did not wish to appear to be running away,—she said to herself distinctly that she was not,—but she meant to get to the fork of the road before Emmons Baird did.

But the hoof-beats behind were coming nearer, and, without once looking around, she threw Rob Roy into a lope, her head erect and a red spot on her cheeks. She was determined to make that fork in the road first.

She did. But, to her surprise, the white horse did not take the road going down to the old Baskin place. In a moment he and his rider were beside her.

"Good aft—good evening!" said a well-oiled voice, which sounded, for all its smoothness, as if it might rasp when the time came.

"Oh, good evening!" said Virginia, politely. She had been beaten, but she need not let him know it. "I *thought* once I heard somebody behind me."

They kept up an intermittent conversation, during which Virginia took herself severely to task. Emmons Baird really had never done anything that she should feel

so toward him! Why could n't she treat him decently, as her mother had said? Of course he was common, and all that, but— Then she made an honest effort to be civil. But girls are queer compounds—and contradictory. The thing that Virginia most disliked in Emmons Baird was that he liked her.

"I suppose you hear from Bev often," he remarked; and Virginia instantly resented the familiarity.

"Do you mean my brother?" she asked.

The rebuff dropped from Emmons Baird's coat of complacency like water from the back of one of his own muscovies.

"Yes. I always call him Bev. Most of them do around the neighborhood, don't they?"

"His friends call him that sometimes. Yes, we hear from him frequently."

"I suppose you hear from young Lay full as often, don't you?" He looked at her with a glance that was meant for playful badinage. But the man was clumsy and very much in earnest. When the badinage reached her, she took it for what it really was—impertinent curiosity. Besides, badinage must be between peers.

"I suppose they hear from him," she said coldly.

He was impervious to the change of pronouns, but even he could not help perceiving the change of atmosphere. He would not abandon the subject, however; for he had carefully planned it to lead up to his main proposition.

"It must be pretty lonesome for you without the boys," he pursued. "And it 's lonesome down at the old Baskin place all the time. Say, Virginia, I 've been thinking that—that—seeing you are lonesome and I am lonesome—we might—have you any objections to our keeping company this winter?"

It was an innocent enough proposition, couched in the language of his part of the country and his class, but

Virginia had never even heard the expression. And the idea of Emmons Baird presuming to call her "Virginia," and to say such a thing, anyway! She was furious.

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. Baird," she said when she had found her voice through her astonishment, "and I do not care for any explanation. If you will excuse me, I will ride on, as I am in something of a hurry."

Her words were civil enough, but her manner was a slap in the face. She could hardly have put more contemptuousness into it. Moreover, it put a quietus upon his hopes, for the present at least. The campaign upon which he had hoped to enter would evidently be unsuccessful. The girl did understand! Every evil passion in the man was aroused. He laid a heavy hand on her horse's bridle and brought him to a walk.

"By God! you won't ride on till you 've heard me out!" he said between set teeth. "I guess there ain't any law against a man's telling a girl he likes her and wants to keep company with her!"

"Let go my horse!"

"You wait till I—"

"Let go my horse, I tell you!"

He tightened his grasp and gave a wicked leer into her white face. They were alone on the road.

But if he thought to cow her thus, he had mistaken the girl. In her right hand was a riding-whip. Without warning, she brought it down in a stinging blow on his hand.

He gave a howl of rage and pain, and involuntarily his grasp relaxed.

Had Virginia been a less expert horsewoman, she might have been in the dust at his feet, after all; for Rob Roy felt the insult of a blow dealt out to a meaner creature and leaped forward.

But she was braced for the leap and kept her seat,

though the package of books fell to the ground. A swift glance over her shoulder showed that he was not in pursuit; but, for all that, she did not draw rein till she was at the big gate of Keswick.

Her excited account of it was characteristically received.

"And what did you do?" Miss Nannie asked breathlessly, when Virginia got as far as the stopping of her horse.

"I gave him a cut with my riding-whip."

"Why, *Virginia!*" exclaimed her mother.

"And served him right!" Miss Nannie asserted stoutly. "Such a man can't be reached except through his hide!"

"Nan, you are as bad as Virginia!"

When Colonel Trevilian heard of it he fairly raged. That a woman should be held up on the highway in such high-handed fashion seemed to a man of his birth and traditions—to say nothing of his somewhat inflammable temperament—a monstrous thing.

He got on his horse and rode straight over to the old Baskin place.

Emmons Baird had reached home and came sullenly out when called for by Colonel Trevilian. He stopped long enough to arm himself, though, and he held one hand across the red welt on the other.

He listened in dogged silence while the Colonel used up five minutes and his extensive vocabulary in telling him what he thought of him, and then he said with a sneer:

"Well, you can call me out if you want to, like you did the other man. I ain't afraid to meet you!"

It was an untimely recalling of the fact, well known in the community but never adverted to, that the Colonel in his hot-headed youth had once met a man in mortal combat on the field of honor.

"Call you out!" he roared; "*you?* Let me tell you, sir, that a gentleman calls out only gentlemen! I would sooner challenge your hound yonder! But I 'll tell you what I *will* do. If ever I hear of your molesting a woman again on the public highway in Jackson County, be it my daughter or a negro wench, I 'll cowhide you within an inch of your life, sir!"

He drew out a yellow silk bandana and wiped his heated face.

"Things have come to a pretty pass if our women can't ride about the country without fear of insult from some blackguard of a fellow, come here from the Lord knows where, for the Lord knows what! Are we to have the methods of Kansas turned loose upon us? If so, we 'd better send for the Kansas slayer and be done with it! By the Eternal! a man like you *deserves* a bullet in the forehead! Why, sir—"

He stopped, struck dumb by the look on the man's face.

During the first part of this arraignment, Emmons Baird had stood in sullen defiance, the hot blood flaming in his swarthy cheek—for no man, however debased, can hear such words from fellow-man without resentment; but as Colonel Trevilian finished, the blood receded, a grayish pallor crept over his face, and a look—a hunted look—of abject terror into his eyes. He drew back and glanced quickly over his shoulder, with an involuntary movement of his hand toward his head. He seemed almost to have forgotten his visitor.

But when Colonel Trevilian had turned his horse's head and he stood alone, Emmons Baird remembered all those stinging words that had fallen like blows upon him, and the blood came back to his face with a rush, and a malignant gleam took the place of the terror in his eyes. He shook his clenched hand after his departing visitor with

a gesture of menace, and his face was that of a bad man who means mischief.

"By God!" he said hoarsely, "I 'll pay you for this, old man, if it takes me forty years!"

Colonel Trevilian said little about the interview when he got home, and nothing at all of the thing that he recalled about it with the most interest. But he pondered over that look deeply. . . . It had been a random shot, but it had brought down the game. . . . Could it be possible that Emmons Baird was—

Nonsense!

CHAPTER IX

THE LOOM-HOUSE ACADEMY

IN spite of Mammy's defection and the logical reason therefor, the new school opened with every prospect of success. The charm of novelty is nowhere more potent than with the race that Miss Abby was seeking to uplift. They may lack staying qualities, but not enthusiasm.

Colonel Trevilian gave her all the assistance she could desire, except that he would not require any of them to attend. They might go if they so elected, but there should be no compulsion in the matter. He had Uncle Peter, the farm carpenter, make some puncheon benches and a long table for the prospective scholars.

Virginia, her ardor undampened by her recent adventure, undertook to see that the room was in readiness. With Liz's help this was done, and when the hour came the old loom-house, with its two tallow candles on the mantelpiece, two more on the table, and the crackle and glow of a hickory fire, was not an unattractive place for Keswick's rival school

The lighting was reinforced at the last minute by Mammy's contribution of a saucer of grease in which was a twisted rag for a wick It is impossible to say whether it was love of Virginia that prompted this offering, or a natural curiosity to see the school-house without a sacrifice of dignity in going thither. At any rate, the Oriental lamp was brought by her and deposited in the middle of the table, where it did its humble best to illuminate a somewhat dark scene.

At the signal—the dinner-bell in Virginia's hands—they came in, a motley crew, headed by old Uncle Bob, crippled and deaf, who usually went to roost with the chickens. They ranged in age down to Ca'line's youngest, Uncle Bob's grandchild. If modern methods had been in vogue then, they might have had the stimulus of class instruction, for they were all at "A."

It really was more of an attendance than Miss Abby had dared hope for. They more than filled the benches on each side of the long table. Virginia promptly seated the overflow of tender years on the floor in front of the fire, where they sat most properly, except for an occasional nervous giggle.

Miss Abby had intended to open the school with prayer, and had so informed Virginia; but when they were seated and looking up into her face with that dumb expectancy which she always found so pathetic, she was suddenly seized with stage fright, if the expression could be so far wrested from its proper place as to refer to prayer. Never in her whole self-possessed life had she felt so embarrassed. Virginia's quick intuition saw the trouble and a way out.

"Call on Uncle Reuben," she whispered.

Miss Abby obeyed. And how Uncle Reuben did pray! The New England woman listened in a sort of dazed wonder. She had conscientiously determined to open every session with prayer,—her own, of course,—which she knew would be halting and imperfect, but better than none. She relinquished the intention before the old man was half through. Uncle Reuben was more at home here than she was.

When she reached home that night she was in a state of excitement that forbade sleep. It seemed to her that this experiment was fraught with no end of possibilities for those she sought to help. Miss Abby confidently be-

lieved that the end of the black man's bondage was near at hand. And she was permitted to have some small share in preparing him for the new life that was before him! She must tell somebody about it. She drew her table before the fire and wrote. What joy that letter would bring to the faithful ones at home waiting for the coming of the day!

"KESWICK, JACKSON COUNTY, MISSOURI,
"November —, 1859.

"MY DEAR FATHER:

"I have delayed my usual letter several days because I had something of importance to communicate and did not wish to do so until after to-night. You will rejoice with me, I know, that the opportunity I so earnestly desired in coming to a slave State—that is, to be able to do something to ameliorate the condition of these poor creatures —has come to me earlier than I dared hope. I shall have the inestimable privilege of leading them to the fountain of knowledge, that they may slake their thirst. When we reflect how long it has been withheld from them, we can well imagine what that thirst must be.

"It has all come about in the most natural manner possible. I can see the hand of Providence in it all.

"When I broached the subject of teaching them, I expected the most bitter opposition, but God had put it into the hearts of Colonel Trevilian and his wife (who really are very good people, though slave-holders) to second my efforts, and, almost before I could ask, my request was granted. I must say that they have been very cordial in their support of my plans.

"To-night I began work in a disused building called the Loom-house, and had a most gratifying attendance. The women, for some unexplainable reason, do not take hold of it as the men do, but I hope they will come in time.

Their ignorance is appalling. Why, they actually do not know the alphabet; and some of them are old men! It will be slow work, but I hope much from their deep interest. I go from one to another, hearing them say the letters I have told them; and often, by the time I have got around, they will have forgotten the first ones.

"Virginia, who is a very bright, attractive girl, though she laughs too much, helped me to-night. She does not seem to mind in the least going near them; but I am ashamed to say that, as anxious as I am to help them, I feel a repugnance at coming in contact with them that as yet I am not able to conquer. I strive constantly against the feeling, but it is so strong that it seems to me they must almost be aware of it. [And they were.] But that is not the way for me to feel, and I hope to overcome it by strong effort and prayer. I consider them down-trodden and oppressed, and I want them to have their rights, but really I am glad that we are not likely to have very many of them in Massachusetts. It seems so strange to me that none of the family here seem to have this repugnance at all.

"There was one thing that surprised me very much. I felt so strangely embarrassed when I came before those old men that I felt unequal to beginning with prayer as I had intended doing,—I think it is best to give them some religious instruction,—and Virginia suggested my calling on Uncle Reuben, the carriage-driver of whom I wrote to you. I did so, and I have hardly ever heard a better prayer. Coming from one who does not even know his letters, it is astonishing! They certainly have had more religious instruction than we have been led to believe, or else he is in communication with the fountainhead. Virginia says he is the exhorter at the prayer-meetings which they hold from cabin to cabin.

"This country is full of surprises to me. You know we had always supposed that they were not allowed to hold any kind of gatherings.

"I feel so uplifted in spirit that I am permitted to do this work, and I hope for great things. With their hunger for knowledge, it will be a pleasure to teach them; and I think—or at least I hope—I shall get over the feeling I spoke of. Pray for me, that I may not faint by the wayside while they struggle on.

"Yr. aff. daughter,

"Abby Ann Cheever."

Miss Abby wrote this letter in a kind of spiritual exaltation. It was on foolscap paper, with a square left blank in the middle of the last page. She folded it dexterously, so that the writing was hidden, and sealed it with red wax. Envelops for general use had not then reached the prairie, and Miss Abby was economical.

They were full of talk the next morning, at the breakfast-table, about the school; and Miss Abby told of her surprise, which she could not get over, at Uncle Reuben's prayer.

"Oh, Reuben makes a good prayer," said Colonel Trevilian; "and, what is more, he lives up to the grade of his praying. Did he ask the Lord to send down His 'sanctum-sanctorum' upon you?"

Miss Abby looked blank. "His 'sanctum-sanctorum'?" she questioned.

"Yes. The bishop tells about being down at one of their meetings in Virginia once, and the old preacher wanted to do his best by them, and he prayed that God would send down His 'sanctum-sanctorum' upon them. The next morning the old preacher (who was the carriage-driver) took his master's guests to the boat. The bishop thought he would get his idea of what it meant.

You know they are more careful to get sound than sense, Miss Abby."

Miss Abby had noticed it, to the great confusion of her ideas. She could not always follow Mammy on account of it.

"Well, the bishop said to him: 'Uncle, I was very much obliged to you for all the good things called down upon me last night, but I wanted to ask you just what you meant by His "sanctum-sanctorum."'

"The old darky scratched his head a moment, and then said: 'Well, master, I don' jes' ezac'ly know what dat word do mean, but I know what I meant by it.'

"'Well, what 's that,' asked the bishop.

"'I meant give 'em de bes' you got!'"

They laughed heartily over the story, and Miss Abby remarked: "Uncle Reuben did n't say that, but he prayed that we might 'be fed from a low rack.' I thought that was good."

"It was expressive enough to one who has ever seen stock try to reach up to a high one," said the Colonel. "Reuben's prayers are full of symbolism. His metaphors are a little mixed sometimes, but they are always striking."

"Miss Abby, that prayer was for you," laughed Mrs. Trevilian. "Uncle Reuben was afraid you would shoot over their heads."

"Well, Jake knows three letters, anyway, if he never learns any more," declared Virginia,—"round O, crooked S, and T. I skipped about."

"I want to know! I began at the beginning and taught them straight down." It hardly seemed orthodox to her to do any other way.

"I tried to teach him Q," said Virginia, with a reminiscent gurgle of laughter; "but he could n't remember it. All he could tell was that it was 'dat un wha' got a tail hitch on.'"

"Virginia, are you going to help Miss Abby every night?" There was evident disapproval in Miss Nannie's voice.

"Yes'm. As long as they come. I think it 's fun."

Miss Abby did not quite understand Virginia's qualifying clause.

"I shall need you all winter," she said. "You are a great help to me."

Miss Nannie smiled—that inscrutable smile that always made Miss Abby uncomfortable.

The school began on Tuesday. Uncle Bob held out till Friday, when he concluded that the late hours were too much for him. He was, doubtless, led to this decision by Aunt Viny's scorn of "any ole fool nigger, wi' one foot in de grave, settin' down studyin' a-b *abs,* stidder gittin' a good night's res'!" Conjugal scorn will tell even on elderly ideals.

When Saturday came, Logan, one of the younger men, and one that Miss Abby counted on most, was missing. He had gone to his wife's house, which Miss Abby considered a most reprehensible thing to do, seeing that he had to miss a night's schooling to do it. Mrs. Trevilian had suggested that Saturday was a bad night to have school, but Miss Abby had said grimly that they needed all the time there was—there was none to lose.

Liz, too, was kept away by a visit from a neighboring gallant on Mr. Swamscott's farm. Miss Abby felt that it was inexcusable for them to let such trivial things interfere with what should be the absorbing interest in life to them.

"Why, of course Logan wants to go to his wife's house," said Mrs. Trevilian, half indignantly, when the grievance was laid before her. "And he ought to go. He has a sick child."

"Can't the mother take care of it?" asked the lady whose teaching instincts were easily stirred, but whose

human impulses were as yet held in abeyance. "He will forget everything he has learned before Monday."

"Then let him forget!" Mrs. Trevilian said, this time more than half indignantly. "Don't you suppose they have any natural affection?"

Liz's case was even worse. She was simply out "sparkin'," as Ca'line explained. It may be said in her defense that her lover, too, could come over but once a week.

"I told you you 'd better not have school on Saturday," said Mrs. Trevilian. "That is their night."

Jake stayed by her until he had mastered half the alphabet, and then his own fireside began to seem more enticing than the Loom-house Academy. Miss Abby did not like for them to come in their working-clothes, and the strain of wearing Sunday "fixin's" on week-days was too much for Jake.

"Ca'line she 'lowed I was too old to learn, anyway," he explained to his irate instructress when she demanded the reason of his withdrawal.

"Nobody is too old to learn that wants to learn!" she had replied with emphasis. And there she unwittingly struck the key-note of the difficulty. They had no strong, abiding desire to learn. It had been a craving for novelty more than a hunger for knowledge that had prompted their attendance, in the first place.

Miss Abby was inexpressibly disappointed in them. Why, they dropped out on the slightest pretext; and as Colonel Trevilian had distinctly stated that he would not compel their attendance, there really was nothing to do but to let them go.

The younger ones held on longer, urged thereto by parental authority, which can sometimes see a good thing for one's offspring more clearly than for one's self; but even this following daily grew thinner. Uncle Reuben had held firm amidst the exodus. He wanted to learn

how to read. But when it was proposed to hold a protracted meeting and the Loom-house was needed for it, Uncle Reuben, too, wavered and succumbed. The meeting was more important than the school;—also more enjoyable.

To say that Miss Abby was grieved at the ignoble failure of her effort is to put it mildly. She was chagrined beyond expression. It seemed to her that the fault must be in her. It could not be possible that any people could be so lacking in enterprise and love of learning. She was disgusted with them and angry with herself. She did not stop to reason that ambition is a thing of inheritance, and that their inheritance had been in the line of sloth.

"They actually seem satisfied to remain in ignorance," she said to Mrs. Trevilian in bewildered helplessness.

"They are. You can see for yourself that they are contented. They would rather have their play-parties and their prayer-meetings than all the learning that you can give them. They are very much like children."

"You could not advance a stronger argument against slavery," cried Miss Abby, with heat. "That they are satisfied with their condition is the deepest degradation of all! It has taken away their manhood and womanhood, and left them content with a mere animal existence. It is worse to destroy the soul than to enslave the body,—infinitely worse! That is no argument at all!"

"Heaven forbid that I should argue!" said Mrs. Trevilian, hastily. "I am no Yankee! I am only stating a fact that you yourself have discovered."

Miss Abby wrote again to her father that night. From the Loom-house could be heard the sound of many voices singing the monotonous hymns so full of resonant sound and so void of sense to any but the singers. It irritated her to hear them. She felt that that letter would be taken in far-off New England as an admission that she had in-

gloriously capitulated at the beginning of the war. And yet—how little they knew about it! Her very first doubt of the wisdom of trying to settle the great problem at long range came over her.

The letter was written from a full heart.

"They drop out," she wrote, "on the most trivial pretexts—a man's wanting to go to his wife's house, a girl to entertain her beau from another farm, the children because they are sleepy, etc. You see, the slaves are permitted to marry those on neighboring farms; and when Saturday night comes, each man thinks he must 'go to his wife's house,' as they always say. Think of allowing such silly things to interfere with the serious matter of education! And they may never have another opportunity like this. I am out of all patience with them! They are so emotional! If they can only get together and sing their senseless hymns, and shout, and carry on, they are perfectly happy."

And at this moment there rolled up from the improvised sanctuary a wave of ecstatic melody:

"Jesus through the heavens ride,
Oh, my Lord!
With two white horses side by side,
An' *oh,* my Lord!
He 's a lily of the valley,
An' *oh,* my Lord!
He 's a lily of the valley,
An' *oh,* my Lord!"

Miss Abby closed the window which she had opened because she was so hot.

Such childishness!

CHAPTER X

A "GROWN-UP MAN"

IF the colored school at Keswick was a failure,—and Miss Abby was forced to confess to herself that it was, —the white one was a most abundant success. Never in the history of the neighborhood had there been a school so well attended and so satisfactory in every way. Miss Abby's methods were advanced, and her scholarship beyond question. Why, she had an intimate acquaintance with Latin, and was even teaching Ike Swamscott the rudiments of Greek.

The ladies of this conservative neighborhood looked covertly for ink-stains and disheveled hair when they heard of these heights of attainment. Classical learning was not unknown even in that day on the frontier, but it was strictly limited to the sex supposed to be able to grasp it. A Latin scholar in petticoats was a rare bird on Grand Prairie, and feminine knowledge of the world's most polished language was limited to "Alpha and Omega"—the first and the last of St. John the Divine. So often, however, had they heard this much in prayer and sermon that it had come to be invested with a kind of sacred solemnity, and when Mrs. Trevilian once accidentally overheard Beverly, in the exuberance of youthful spirits and recent acquisition, running over his Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, with its inevitable paraphrase of "At 'er! Beat 'er! Damn 'er! Pelt 'er!" she was shocked beyond expression, and realized that the new learning was beset with dangers.

So successful was Miss Abby's school that before Christmas Colonel Trevilian and the rest were making their plans to secure her for the coming year. Of course, as some of the ladies said, she had a brother in Lawrence, —but that really was not her fault, and perhaps he was not an Abolitionist, after all. It was not right to condemn a man unheard.

The hearing came off sooner than they expected.

Miss Abby had a letter one day that threw the Trevilian household into great excitement. Her brother, Dr. Cheever, announced that he would be over at Christmas to spend a day or two with her.

"Write to him and tell him to arrange to stay at least a week," said Mrs. Trevilian, hospitably,—"two, if he can."

"Could you board him here?" Miss Abby questioned.

"Board him! Miss *Abby!* Do you suppose I would charge your brother board? Write to him to come exactly as you would if you were in your mother's house."

These Missouri people certainly were hospitable, Miss Abby thought, as she wrote the message; but, of course, it was easy to be hospitable with all these negroes to do the work,—when Jake stood ready to take the horses, and Mammy to make the fires, and Aunt Viny to wring the chickens' necks, and all were in such a ridiculous state of delight at having company. Which was all true enough; but then it is always easier when it runs in the blood,—and it had run in the Trevilian blood since the memory of man.

Virginia and Sallie Devereau speculated not a little as to what Dr. Cheever would look like: one predicting that he would be fat and bald; the other, that he would be tall and thin, with a general odor of asafetida, and spectacles over which he would look at them if they giggled, —and they would be sure to giggle,—which they pro-

ceeded now to do hysterically, just to prove that they were not past the stage.

"I know he 'll be prim," prophesied Virginia.

"Of course," Sallie assented; "he could n't be Miss Abby's brother and not be prim. I suppose he will say, 'I presume,' and 'good afternoon,' and maybe 'Toosday' and 'had n't ought.'"

"Yes, and 'I want to know!'" and Virginia drew down her brows and spoke the words with a voice so like Miss Abby's that Sallie went into fresh convulsions. "Well, you may look for me to spend most of this week at yo'-all's house."

But she did not, as Sallie took occasion to remind her afterward.

"No," Mrs. Trevilian was saying to Miss Nannie about the same time. "I don't really expect to enjoy the visit very much, but I want to be nice to Miss Abby's brother. I suppose he will see the weak points in our Missouri farming, and tell us about them as Miss Abby does about my management."

They were out on the porch to meet him, leaving roaring fires and all sorts of good cheer inside. Virginia and Miss Nannie kept back in the doorway, and Mammy was taking a surreptitious peep from behind the parlor curtains.

"Is n't he little!" whispered Virginia. "But he is awfully handsome."

Dr. Cheever greeted Miss Abby affectionately, and acknowledged his presentation to Mrs. Trevilian with courteous cordiality.

"I am very glad to meet you, madam. I feel that I know you already from my sister's letters, and most pleasantly."

He had a cultured voice, and said "madam" like a Virginian, Miss Nannie was inwardly commenting. Where did he learn to do that?

"Ah, Miss Trevilian," and he bowed low over Miss Nannie's hand. Then he turned to the girl beside her, and, without waiting for an introduction, said:

"And this I am sure must be Miss Virginia—my sister's—" *assistant* he was going to say in a spirit of raillery; but, remembering Miss Abby's grief at the fate of that venture, and having the tact that can spare its own flesh and blood,—a rare kind,—he finished—"my sister's star pupil."

Virginia blushed and somehow felt strangely immature and underdone.

When they were in the parlor he said:

"Mrs. Trevilian, you have a beautiful place here. It reminds me of some of the old colonial homes on the Atlantic seaboard. Abby, you remember the old Williams place with the columns? This reminds me of it."

"This was modeled after an old colonial home," Mrs. Trevilian said; "but not in your part of the country, I think."

"Oh, but, I have been in Virginia," he exclaimed eagerly; "I spent two teaching years there. I have seen Mount Vernon and Arlington House and Monticello. These columns are very familiar to me."

"Oh, have you seen Monticello?" cried Miss Nannie. "Albemarle is our old home."

It was an instant bond of sympathy between them.

So the talk fell upon Virginia and its customs and people, about which they delighted to talk, and then turned to differing types of architecture, colonial and otherwise, in which their visitor led. Virginia listened with deepest interest. She had never thought before about there being any distinctive types of architecture, North or South. There was an eager give and take that put them at once upon an easy footing. Miss Nannie could not help contrasting it all with the first night Miss Abby was with them.

When they sat down to the table Dr. Cheever exclaimed like a boy:

"Beaten biscuits! I haven't seen any since I was in Virginia,"—and they were at it again.

Then Emmeline withdrew, nominally to replenish the plate, but really to report: "You won't have to tell him what waffles is! He 's discoursin' right now about beat biscuits an' ole Figinny, an' de white folks can't beat him on ary one!"

"Colonel," remarked Dr. Cheever when they had returned to the parlor, "it seems to me you hear more of counties in Virginia and Missouri than in the North."

"I 've noticed that," said Miss Abby, with surprise.

"They always talk here about going over to Lafayette or to Cass when they really mean they are going to some town in Lafayette or Cass."

"And Miss Trevilian has just said she was from Albemarle County, Virginia, and that Dr. Lay, your neighbor, is from Fayette County, Kentucky."

"But if he had been telling you, he would have said he was from near Lexington," put in Miss Nannie, and the family smiled. Dr. Cheever smiled, too, in sympathy, though he did not see the point.

"I suppose the reason is that we of the South are an agricultural people, sir, and live largely on farms and plantations," returned Colonel Trevilian. "We have n't many cities in Missouri, as you Northern people count cities."

They were gathered around the big wood fire in the parlor now, Virginia on an ottoman at Miss Nannie's side, over in the corner. Dr. Cheever, from his place in the center of the group, found his eyes wandering in her direction frequently. She took almost no part in the conversation, except with her eyes; but a sympathetic listener is sometimes the most agreeable companion, and Virginia

was listening with ear and eye. She was finding the talk of this grown-up gentleman, so well dressed, so self-possessed and easy in his manner, so evidently a man of the world, intensely interesting. He had something to say and knew how to say it.

"I think perhaps there is an underlying reason a little deeper even than that, Colonel," he was saying. "The two parts of the country were differently organized. You know that in New England the township was the unit of representation in the colonial legislature, but in Virginia it was not the parish that was the unit of representation,—it was the county."

The Colonel assented. He really had not thought of this before.

"Well, that difference is very significant. As the political life of New England was built up out of the political life of the towns, so the political life of Virginia was built up out of the political life of the counties. This was partly, as you say, because they were on plantations and those plantations were not grouped about a compact village nucleus like the small farms at the North, and partly, I am inclined to think, because there was never in Virginia that Puritan theory of the church according to which each congregation is a self-governing democracy. Don't you think there is something in that?"

"Undoubtedly," returned the Colonel. "I had n't thought of it before in just that way, but I can see that there would be the difference that you suggest."

"Yes. I studied it up a little when I was in Virginia. These sectional peculiarities interest me."

It was one of Dr. Cheever's conversational charms that he was always saying things on any subject brought up that nobody had thought of before, but that they could see at once after he had talked three minutes about it. Some persons are strongest in their ability to inspire

thought. The Colonel was thinking how pleasant it was to discuss in this broad way points of difference between North and South without having the everlasting subject of slavery lift its head. It could n't be done with Miss Abby.

"That is a striking portrait you have there, Colonel," the visitor remarked, looking up at old Colonel Trevilian of Albemarle above the mantle.

"My father, sir," returned the Colonel, with pride. "Yes, sir, it is a fine picture—of a fine old country gentleman."

"It reminds me of one I saw abroad. I forget just where that was,—but it was by an American artist, and was labeled 'A Colonial Gentleman.'" And the talk drifted to Europe and his travels.

"He certainly was changed in the cradle!" declared Miss Nannie when she and Virginia were up-stairs after an evening in which everybody had appeared at his best, and there was not time to say all the things clamoring to be said. "The same mother never bore him and Miss Abby! He certainly is one of the most agreeable gentlemen I have ever met. Why, you would n't know, except from his pronunciation, that he was not from Virginia."

"Perhaps it is because he has been abroad, Aunt Nan." Virginia spoke almost in an awed tone. "I never have seen anybody before that had been to Europe."

"Neither have I. There are not many people that get to Europe, I can tell you."

But the same mother had borne them, impossible as it seemed. And the very things that had made Miss Abby what she was had made him what he seemed.

Miss Abby was the eldest of a New England family, to whom bread and an education were the necessities of life,—butter, and the numberless little refinements whose

sum total is culture, were its luxuries. In her rigid determination that each Cheever in turn should have the first, the last had slipped from her own stiffening fingers.

This brother was the youngest. He should have such advantages as she would have given her own right hand for. And so she had taught school to fit him for college; she had scrimped and saved to help him through Yale; she had denied herself travel and alluring luxuries of every sort that he might study abroad when he had proved that it would be worth while; and she had done all this until saving and calculating had become to her second nature and an object in themselves. But the struggle, which had left her less lovable, perhaps, than she might have been had there been no struggle, had left him free to use his powers to the utmost. It is true that he had scrupulously refunded to her the money advanced, but who can return the heart of a sacrifice, which is the life blood that has gone into it?

But it had been a free-will offering. And she was having her reward to-night as she saw him holding his own in wit and repartee and graver themes with this old Virginia family, between whom and herself there had always been an impalpable social barrier. Abiel was a match for them all, she was thinking. And Abiel was her idol.

CHAPTER XI

A CHAPTER OF BORDER HISTORY

AS might have been expected, Dr. Cheever entered heartily into the life of the neighborhood, which was unusually gay at this Christmas season. A man of his adaptability could hardly fail to fit in anywhere.

The first thing was a horseback ride over to Sallie Devereau's, which was successfully accomplished after Dr. Cheever was once in the saddle. Virginia lost her awe of him during that ordeal, and was able to laugh and talk with him afterward, just as if he had always been a dweller on the prairie.

When Sunday came, he innocently suggested (being quite in love with his new accomplishment) that he and Virginia ride; but Virginia reminded him that it would hardly be fair for her to take him away from Miss Abby, and he agreed at once to go in the carriage if she would.

"You are crazy!" Virginia said to Miss Nannie, who privately urged her to ride if Dr. Cheever wanted to go that way,—even Miss Nannie had fallen under his spell. "Do you suppose I am going to ride to church with anybody that has to have his horse brought up to the blocks? Why, I would n't hear the last of it for a year! He gets into a carriage beautifully."

But at the church she thought with a concern she had never felt before of how it must all strike one who had seen all that Dr. Cheever had seen at home and abroad. If their guest felt any amusement, however, at the crudi-

ties of the little church, he was too well bred to disclose it by word or look.

There were parties that week, and a wedding, and an infare the next day at the groom's house, and the Trevilians were kept busy with it all.

During all this time there had never been a reference to the border troubles that had kept Missouri and Kansas in an uproar for the last five years,—such portions of the two States, at least, as had been adjacent. They all recognized that as a dangerous topic. And yet both gentlemen had felt a growing desire to talk it over before they parted; for each felt sure now that he would have a reasonable person to talk to.

It was the last day of Dr. Cheever's visit, and they were all seated around the open fire in Mrs. Trevilian's room, which, after the custom of the country, was the general sitting-room,—all, that is, except Miss Abby, who was busy with school papers.

"I saw a man to-day, as we were coming home from Dr. Lay's," said Dr. Cheever, thoughtfully, with half-closed eyes, "that I am sure I have seen before."

"Who was it?" asked Mrs. Trevilian.

"What did you say his name was, Miss Virginia?"

"Emmons Baird," she replied, turning uncomfortably red.

"Oh!" said Miss Nannie. "An old friend of Virginia's."

Her niece shot an indignant glance at her and frowned at her mother, giving imploring pinches meanwhile at her father's arm as she leaned against him. She did not want Dr. Cheever to hear that story.

"Emmons Baird," repeated Dr. Cheever, oblivious of this little family by-play. His eyes were closed now in his effort to fit name and face together. "I never heard of Emmons Baird that I know of, but I am sure I have

seen that face. It is not one to forget, now, is it?" He appealed to the Colonel.

"It is not," his host replied. He was thinking of it as he saw it that day last fall. The white terror in it had stayed with him for days. "Where do you think you have seen him?"

"In Kansas, unless I am greatly mistaken. I think he is one of a company that came in there in '55. You know that about that time they were coming in from almost everywhere. I think this man was one of them."

"Oh, I reckon not, Doctor. At least, he is a slaveholder now. He bought a man and a woman soon after he came to this neighborhood. A man that had come out to make Kansas a free State would hardly do that."

"How long has he been in this neighborhood?"

"About a year and a half or two years. I can't say exactly."

"I think—I 've seen that man in Kansas," Dr. Cheever insisted. "Let—me—see—"

"You have seen pretty much all of this Kansas-Missouri trouble, have n't you, Doctor? I think Miss Abby told me you were one of the first to go."

"Yes, sir; I was in the second company that got to Lawrence. The first one preceded us by about six weeks. They pitched their tents on the present site of Lawrence, August 1, 1854."

"You did n't lose much time," remarked the Colonel, dryly. "I believe the Kansas-Nebraska bill was signed only the May before."

"Well, Colonel," laughed Dr. Cheever, "you people were so quick on the triggers that we did n't *have* any time to lose. You were here before us, as it was."

"We entered the territory immediately, sir."

"And we did as soon as we could get there."

They both laughed. They had wanted to do it all

along, and now they were safely started. Miss Abby being away and Miss Nannie sitting with lips shut tight, they thought they could get through it all right.

"It was a race," said Colonel Trevilian; "and you beat us. That is about all there was to it."

"Well, Colonel, you gave us a good run. There 's no denying that. I don't think you have anything to reproach yourselves with. At the spring election in 1855 you polled more votes than there were voters in the State. You could n't hope to do more than that!" And he threw back his head with a hearty laugh, in which they all joined.

"I don't deny it, sir; I don't deny it. But we thought we were fighting the devil with fire. You were bound to have the State, and so were we."

"The trouble was, Colonel, that you took up only a voting residence. If you had gone to stay, now, as we did—"

"I don't know about that. The impression prevailed here that yours was a fighting residence. You know there was a great dearth of women and agricultural implements in those companies."

"Is it true, Doctor, as we have heard," asked Mrs. Trevilian, "that one company was sent out to Kansas from New England armed with Bibles and Sharpe's rifles, and told to use both?"

"I believe it is," admitted Dr. Cheever. "They were from New Haven, and were known as the 'rifle Christians.' But that was later, Mrs. Trevilian, after it seemed necessary for them to control the polls and protect themselves."

"We understood that both were presented by a minister of the gospel."

"Yes, they were—by Henry Ward Beecher."

Miss Nannie shut her lips tight!

"You know what the inspecting officer said about the companies sent in by way of Nebraska after our patrol of the Missouri had barred them out that way?" asked Colonel Trevilian.

"What was that, Colonel?"

"He said, 'I do not see many spinning-wheels sticking out of the wagons.' But he found a remarkable assortment of farming implements, sir,—muskets, carbines, sharp-shooters, revolvers, and ammunition. And these are the implements with which southeastern Kansas has been farmed for several years! You know that, Doctor. Well, such crops never fail."

"No," said Dr. Cheever, shaking his head; "and what is more, they follow the law of the harvest—which is increase."

They sat in silence a moment, and then Colonel Trevilian said: "Doctor, whatever was the nature of the first emigration to Kansas, its character later was clearly warlike. You can't gainsay that. And you can't wonder that we felt alarmed. There are a hundred thousand slaves in Missouri, ten thousand of them in Jackson and Lafayette counties, and we are right here on the border. We fully believed that you had come down here to incite an insurrection, to arm them and get up a servile war. That threat was made on the streets of Weston, sir. You know John Brown was right here,—and he did his best. That affair on the Pottawatomie was a butchery!"

"Oh-h! old John Brown!" exclaimed Miss Nannie, as if words were inadequate.

"Understand that I don't indorse John Brown," said Dr. Cheever, hastily. "I believe the time will come when John Brown and his methods will be repudiated by his own party."

"If we had had money enough," continued Colonel Trevilian, who had been pursuing his own train of

thought, "we should have won. We could have brought our people here from the South just as you did from the North,—paid their way and made it an object for them to come. But then, we did n't have the money, so there 's no use talking about it."

"Colonel,"—Dr. Cheever stopped and then went on valiantly,—"it was not the money you lacked."

"You think it was a high moral purpose?" asked Mrs. Trevilian, smiling.

"I did n't say that. I would not dare to, with Miss Nannie sitting so close."

"No!" she said, shaking her head at him; "you 'd better not!"

"I did n't! and I 'm not going to! Would you, Miss Virginia?"

She shook her head. "No." Adding coaxingly: "Go on! I love to hear you and father talk."

"I don't know about all that," said Colonel Trevilian, returning to the charge. "I concede to *you,* Dr. Cheever, and men like you, the highest possible motive in giving up your life in the East and coming here to Kansas. I think you were wrong, but I trust I am not so unacquainted with principle myself that I cannot recognize it in other men—"

Dr. Cheever with a sudden impulse extended his hand.

"Thank you, Colonel," he said with much earnestness.

Colonel Trevilian took the offered hand in a cordial clasp. It seemed almost like a pledge of friendship, come what might.

"You are all right, my boy!" he said heartily; "you are all right!—from your point of view. Of course you were born on the wrong side of the line to get the *right* point of view. But I tell you, Doctor, all the men that have come to Kansas are not of your stamp."

"Probably not. I know, in fact, that the later con-

panies were not always selected with much care. Indeed, it would have been impossible to discriminate and weed out undesirable persons."

"Yes, but when you put a money motive before men for allying themselves with a movement, and at the same time give them the shelter of a high moral purpose, it is not surprising if unprincipled men take advantage of it. And some unprincipled men came out with those companies. *That I know.* Now you take this man Tigerman, for instance, right here in this neighborhood. He came out with one of these very companies that you were speaking of—those that took in 'rag, tag, and bobtail.'"

"I don't remember that I said quite that—" began Dr. Cheever.

"No, but I did. Now, Tigerman had his expenses paid out here to settle in Kansas. But when he got to Kansas City he looked over into the territory and found it bare and rather poor picking, and then over into Missouri, where the farms were well stocked and the farmers prosperous, and he forgot his cause and dropped down here. What do you think of that?"

"I hope he will stay. Kansas is better off without him."

"I hope he will go. Missouri doesn't want him. . . . Then there is Emmons Baird. You say you are pretty sure he belonged to a company that came out to make Kansas a free State. And he is here now—a slaveholder! I tell you such men have no principle—or, if they have, it is of the quicksilver variety. You never can put your finger on it! They are in the free-State movement or any other movement for what they can get out of it. Now, to my mind," he continued thoughtfully, "there are three kinds of men in Kansas: men of honor like yourself, actuated by the most exalted humanitarian principle—I concede that they are there, and I am glad they

are, for God knows they are needed; then, second, there are men of the John Brown stripe—fanatics, sir, with principle of a certain kind, perhaps, but no sense to balance it,—and a fanatical fool is always a dangerous man; then, last and worst, blatherskites like Tigerman, who have *sense* of a certain kind, but no *principle* to balance it. They may not all be bad men now, either; but men without fixed principles are always in danger of becoming bad men, and dangerous men, if the opportunity comes. Strengthen your own class, Doctor; for if the John Browns and the Tigermans ever come to the front, they will give Kansas a black eye that she will not get over in a day!"

"I suppose there are bad men everywhere," Dr. Cheever remarked reflectively.

"Yes; but you 'll find more where they are rushed in for a purpose, with pecuniary rewards in plain sight,—you thought so when we went over to help you vote,—and it is all the worse when they are under a banner dubbed 'Philanthropy.' We called ours plain 'Self-interest.'"

"I suppose it is hard to say just which side has been the most to blame in this dreadful border warfare," said Mrs. Trevilian.

"Yes, Mrs. Trevilian, it is hard to get down to the real beginning of a war of retaliation; and from first to last this Missouri-Kansas trouble has been of that kind—though I know many people in the East who could not be persuaded that that is true. But I think it is over. I believe the peace they celebrated down here at Fort Scott last summer will be a lasting one."

"I hope so, from the bottom of my heart," said Colonel Trevilian. "But *you mark my words,* Doctor,"—he raised his finger and punctuated his utterances with it.—"if war, with its opportunities and its temptations to un-

bridled license, should ever come, and men of the Tiger-man stripe get the whip-hand in Kansas—*God save the State!*"

"And God save the border!" said Mrs. Trevilian, with sudden prescience.

They sat in silence a few moments, and then Colonel Trevilian said:

"I suppose you have seen some stormy times in Kansas, Doctor?"

"I have, indeed. And it is not entirely over yet. There is still a good deal of lawlessness. It is better than it was; but life is pretty cheap. . . . But, Colonel, one of the strangest things I have come across—one of the hardest to unravel—is going on there right now. Do you know, there is a mysterious somebody going around that country putting his mark on this man, and that, and the other,—and when the mark is there the man is gone! None of them live to tell the tale."

"And that mark?" asked the Colonel, with interest.

"Is a bullet-hole in the center of the forehead. It never varies. And I suppose I 've seen a dozen of those men."

Virginia was leaning against her father from the ottoman which was her favorite seat. She sat up now, and looked at the speaker with fascinated eyes which dilated and darkened as she listened.

"This must be what Dr. Lay was telling us about, father!"

"Undoubtedly. I think he said it had been going on for several years, from what he could hear."

"Yes, sir; the first that I ever heard of it was four years ago this winter, in 1856. A man was found dead out on the prairie west of town. I was called to examine him. It seemed a peculiar case to me then, because it was such a clean piece of work. Well, sir, in about two months I was called again to examine a man discovered

in the woods not far away. It was exactly such a case. A single bullet had pierced the brain. Since then the cases have multiplied until it positively seems almost dangerous to live in the community."

"Is it always in the vicinity of Lawrence?"

"No, not always. I heard the other day of a victim found two or three counties away. The man had left Lawrence because he was afraid to stay. But his enemy found him out."

"Is there no clue to it at all?" asked Mrs. Trevilian.

"No-o, you can't really say there is a clue to the murderer, but a strange coincidence has been noticed that may lead to a clue."

"What is that?" asked Colonel Trevilian.

"Well, at first there were no data to go upon at all. For all one could tell it was merely chance that chose each victim—young or old, rich or poor, married or single, it was all the same. That shut out the idea that it was from the ordinary motives that prompt such deeds. It could n't have been jealousy, for some of those men were middle-aged men of family. It evidently was not for robbery, for the men's pockets were always unrifled."

"Remarkable!" ejaculated the Colonel.

"After a while it was noticed that every man killed was a Kansan—a free-State man, I mean."

"A-ha!" said Colonel Trevilian, thoughtfully. "Is it supposed that this is the work of the Missourians in Kansas, sir?"

"No, Colonel; I think that is not held by anybody now. There was some feeling at first that it might be, but there is absolutely no evidence to prove it. In fact, no set of men among us have done more to ferret this thing out than the Missourians. It is clearly the work of one man, or a combination of men actuated by the same purpose and having attained the same skill in the use of the re-

volver,—and that is a consummate skill! My own idea is that it is the work of a monomaniac—a man insane on this one subject. Still—"

He stopped.

"Well?" queried the Colonel.

"I was going to say that one thing which would give color to the theory that it is the work of the pro-slavery faction is that every man found dead has been discovered, by tracing the thing back, to have been identified with a band of jayhawkers that a few years ago went around Kansas doing pretty deadly work, I guess, from what I can hear."

"H'm! That looks bad." The Colonel shook his head. "I sincerely hope the pro-slavery men would not carry their retaliation to such a length as that. Does this band still exist?"

"No, sir; they disbanded some time ago, I am told, and have scattered—possibly because the observation had been made that the victims were all from among their number."

"It is a very strange case," said Colonel Trevilian,—"very strange, indeed."

"You don't know whether this man Baird ever lived in Kansas?" asked Dr. Cheever, irrelevantly.

Colonel Trevilian thought not. He had come here from Virginia, it was said, though nobody seemed to know much about him or his antecedents. They talked very little about their affairs,—were quite close-mouthed, in fact. Why?

"Oh, nothing," Dr. Cheever returned. "I just had a little curiosity about the man. I can't get his face out of my mind."

"Aunt Nan does n't believe he is a Virginian, Dr. Cheever," said Virginia, mischievously. "Tell him why, Aunt Nan."

"He may be," said Miss Nannie; "but I have never

seen a Virginian before that said 'had n't ought.' Have you, Dr. Cheever?"

"Never!" he laughed. "You have us there, certainly."

"And I 've never seen one that could n't bound his own county, either."

"I wish I could see this man and talk with him," Dr. Cheever said, after a pause. "I believe I could tell whether he is a Virginian, from his speech. And maybe I could tell some other things."

"From his speech?" asked Virginia.

"Yes," he said dryly. "If I could make him speak long enough."

Then he rose.

"Come, Miss Virginia; let 's go for a farewell gallop. Miss Nannie, I can actually get up now without a stump. I had to give Jake a dollar, though, to get back his respect after having my horse led up to the blocks. But I 'm learning—a good many things."

Ten minutes later they were cantering gaily down the road toward Dr. Lay's for a last call.

"Aunt Nan," said Virginia that night as they were undressing,—she was so under the influence of the Kansas story that she would not sleep alone,—"I have the strangest feeling about what Dr. Cheever was telling us. . . . I feel perfectly sure that in some way that man (I know it is just one) is going to come into our lives! Do you suppose it is a presentiment?"

"No!" returned Miss Nannie, with emphasis. "It 's biliousness! You need a blue-mass pill. Your liver is out of order."

"Aunt Nan!" Virginia spoke indignantly. "You know you have always said I did n't have any liver!"

"Well, you are getting one—to talk like that! Or else you have enlargement of the imagination! There is

not much difference between the two. You have been reading too many of Mrs. Emma D. E. N. Southworth's stories, or Sylvanus Cobb, Jr.'s. I 'll put you on a course of calomel and Baxter's 'Saints' Rest.' That will hit both!"

Virginia clothed her soul with a garment of dignified silence, but her last waking thought was:

"He will! I know he will!"

CHAPTER XII

A PEN-AND-INK SKETCH

ABOUT ten days after Dr. Cheever went back to Kansas, Gordon Lay—away off in Lexington, Kentucky—was reading a letter written in a running feminine hand and dated "Keswick." It said:

"I am sure you will want to know all about what sort of a time we had Christmas, when Miss Abby's brother was here, and what we thought of him, so I 'take my pen in hand,' etc., to tell you all about it.

"You know we expected to have a perfectly funereal time at Christmas, with you and brother gone. Of course we were sad when we thought of you; but I don't think I ever had a nicer time in my life. ["That 's pleasant for a starter!" said Gordon.] If all grown-up men are like Dr. Cheever, Sallie and I feel that we just can't wait for Richmond and Lexington to come. I know Sallie has told you what we did and where we went, so I will tell you all about Dr. Cheever. I am sure that will interest you more than anything else I could write. [Gordon gave a grunt, and turned the pages of the letter over. "Cheever to the end—confound him!"]

"Well, to begin with, he is very small, but exceedingly handsome. I never thought before that I could possibly like a small man, but after you know him well you hardly think of his being small. He says he thinks men grow too large in the West,—larger, that is, than they were intended to be. And I don't know but they

do. I can think now of a good many that seem too tall, really. Father asked him if he did not think that in New England they might be a little under size, but he thinks not. If he is small in stature, he certainly is not in brain. He is the most intelligent man I ever saw in my life. Why, he seems to know something about everything. Aunt Nan says he is what old Mrs. Tolles would call 'a phenomena by natur'.' And she was n't making fun, either. Aunt Nan thinks he is awfully nice. ["Oh, he 's got them all if Miss Nannie thinks he is nice," groaned Gordon.]

"There is one funny thing about him, though. He does n't know how to ride! Or at least he did n't when he came. I gave him riding-lessons while he was here, and he got along splendidly. We kept the horses saddled most of the time, and when there was nothing else to do we went riding. He was so anxious to learn! Does n't it seem funny to think of a man that can't ride? I always supposed they knew by instinct. I never heard before of anybody's having to learn. But he says they don't ride much in New England,—they go in buggies.

"Dr. Cheever thinks I am an excellent teacher, but severe. That 's what he said. I suppose it was because I told him I positively *would* not go with him again until he learned to mount from the ground. You see, the first time we went riding, Jake brought the horses out, and we were on the horse-blocks, and Dr. Cheever did n't make any motion to bring my horse up, and so I told Jake to do it. And then Dr. Cheever seemed sort of helpless, and Jake looked wild, and I suppose father thought somebody ought to do something, so he told Jake to lead Dr. Cheever's horse up to the blocks,—and he did. Everybody was very grave; but when I looked back, father had gone straight to the house, and I could see Aunt Nan going off into conniptions behind the Venetian blinds,

and I thought Jake would have a fit! He was just doubled up!

"But Dr. Cheever never knew a word of it. He was too busy holding Milo in. You know, Gordon, Milo is the pokiest old thing on the place! Well, we were going over to your father's, and I kept wondering how in the world I would get him in the saddle again. I knew we would have a perfectly delightful call, and that they would be charmed with him,—as they were,—but I did dread the scene at the horse-blocks. I told Sallie about it on the sly, and, do you know, she got us out of it in the slickest way! She is too cute for anything! Dr. Cheever did n't know what she was up to, and neither did I till it was over.

"I got on my horse—I was n't going to help him if he never got up! But Sallie switched Milo around, made a bow, and said with a great show of ceremony:

"'Allow me, Dr. Cheever! This is the way we do in the West.' And there was the horse ready for him to mount from the blocks, and everybody laughing at Sallie. Ain't she cute? Well, I tell you, it saved the day! I told him on the way home that if he was going to ride with me, he simply *had* to learn to mount from the ground; that Milo would let a baby climb up his legs into the saddle; and he could take him down in the pasture, where nobody could see, and practise till he learned. I suppose it *was* severe, but it had to be done! Now he gets up as well as anybody—almost.

[Gordon was beginning to take more interest in the subject. This letter was n't bad.]

"I suppose you will be thinking from all this that Dr. Cheever does n't amount to much. [And he was.] But when I tell you that he is small and can't ride, I have told you the very worst. He is a perfectly delightful man to talk to. He makes you *think* things. You see, he is so

well up in books and everything of that kind. He has been laying out a course of reading for me, and is going to send me the books when he gets home. Gordon, could you lay out a course of reading for a girl? I don't believe you could. I never even heard you intimate that you thought I needed a course of reading. But Dr. Cheever is so cultivated in that line.

"Then he has traveled so much, and can tell so many interesting things about the places he has seen. That makes a man such charming company, you know. He thinks I ought to go to Boston for my finishing year—says I would have better advantages there than in Richmond—in art and all those things. But I don't believe a word of it, do you? I don't believe Boston is ahead of Richmond in *anything*. I told him so, and he just laughed.

"Dr. Cheever talks beautifully about art. He has told me things about pictures and statuary that I never dreamed of. Mother says it is a liberal education to live in the house with him. ["Oh, they 've all got it!" interpolated Gordon.] Everybody likes him, even the servants. He certainly knows how to make friends. He is not a bit like Miss Abby. He put his shoes out to be blacked the first morning he was here, and now they have some respect for him. The second morning he put a quarter in the shoes, Liz says.

"He seems really fond of Miss Abby. Is n't it funny? Of course I like Miss Abby and think she is a good teacher, and all that, but I don't really see how anybody could be fond of her. There does n't seem to be anything to catch hold of. But he is *so* different!

"Well, this is a long letter, but I knew you would want to know all about Dr. Cheever, and what we thought of him. Write soon. "As ever,

"VIRGINIA.

"P. S. Dr. Cheever thinks he will not always remain in Kansas. He has told me so much about Boston, and it makes me feel so differently about the place from the way I used to feel. I encourage him to go back there. [If Gordon had been a swearing man, he would certainly have sworn at this. "'Encourage him to go back!'" What concern of hers was it where he went?]

"P. S. No. 2. I forgot to tell you how much we missed you.

"VIRGE.

"P. S. No. 3. It seems that I will never get through. I just wanted to add that Dr. Cheever is coming over to see Miss Abby again in about a month. He thinks the books will be here by then. He says it is so near that he thinks he will come over often and see how she is getting along. He seems to be such a good brother.

"V. T."

When Gordon finished reading this letter, he sat a long time tugging at his mustache, which had recently come. He felt so hopelessly young.

CHAPTER XIII

LIVING PICTURES IN THE OLDEN TIME

IT takes so short a time for a year to roll by! Almost before the winter was begun at Keswick it was gone, and the spring was like unto it. Now, June roses were blooming, and the boys were coming home!

It always seemed on Grand Prairie, when the young people were scattered in the fall, that "the mirth of the land was gone"; but it was renewed tempestuously with the home-coming. Always, for the first day, two of that quartet looked at each other shyly, noting the changes that the year had wrought and waiting to see whether this tall young man with a hint of beard were really Gordon, and the young lady in crinoline and lengthened skirts the Virge of old. But it never took more than a day, nor so long for Beverly and Sallie.

They always rushed at each other, took one critical look, and then stood off, Beverly saying anxiously:

"Sallie, don't you think your hair is just one shade redder than it was?"

At which Miss Devereau would lift her crown of auburn locks and say sweetly:

"I should know you anywhere, Beverly, by your manners and your freckles. It is too bad they don't teach elimination and substitution in your school." She added one day: "I would use buttermilk and tansy if I were you. It 's very good."

"Have you used it?" he asked with interest; and the

unsuspecting Sallie walked straight into the trap and said, "Yes;—often."

"Then I think I 'll try the other thing," he remarked quietly, with a look at her complexion, which went naturally with red hair.

They were always sparring at each other, but could never keep apart. Mrs. Trevilian used to look at them sometimes and wonder what the future had in store for them. Sallie was a dear child!

"I do hope the boat won't strike a sand-bar," Sallie was saying just now to Virginia, as the two sat pasting gilt stars on the crown of Night which had been fitted to Virginia's head, and on the filmy veil that was to accompany it. "It will be perfectly dreadful if they don't get here for the tableaux, for we 've saved the very best ones that need men for them."

"Oh, they will get here. It is nearly time for the June rise. There are no sand-bars now."

"I 'm sure I hope so," said Miss Nannie from the side of the bed, where she was cutting out *Ahasuerus's* robe of royal purple. "This is too long for anybody but Beverly. Virginia, if you are through you can be basting the spots on this ermine."

They were deep in the manufacture of royal robes, for the school year was to end with such an exhibition as the neighborhood had never known.

John Pasco and Ike Swamscott were already wrestling with *Brutus* and *Cassius,* whom they were expected to do up in the most approved style. There were no misgivings about their undertaking what in later years was to call forth the best efforts of two giants of the boards. Grand Prairie was not critical in matters pertaining to the drama, having no standards by which to judge or be judged.

Virginia's part was a finished essay—remarkably deep,

Miss Abby said—on "The Seasons of the Heart." Dear child! to whom life had been all spring. She had got the title from the back of Quackenbos's "Rhetoric," and evolved the contents from her inner consciousness.

Sallie was expecting to score a triumph in "The Maniac." She practised it nightly before the glass, rolling her eyes in the fine frenzy that maniacs are supposed to maintain, and wailing effectively at the end of each stanza:

"I *am* not mad! I *am* not mad!"

Miss Abby had rather objected to this selection as unsuited to the time and place, but Sallie had heard it down in Fulton at a school exhibition, and she pleaded so hard to be allowed to try her hand on it that Miss Abby gave in. Sallie proposed to have it with all the accessories, and hunted up an old piece of log-chain which she contrived to have manacled around her tender wrists, as no maniac has had done since the days of Miss Dorothea Dix. But that Sallie did not know.

The principal interest of the exhibition, however, centered in the tableaux. These were something new in the neighborhood, and were invested with unusual charm because they necessitated a curtain. Even sheets drawn back and forth with but indifferent success give an air of mystery to a performance which is delightfully stimulating, though Mr. McTavish, who was Scotch-Irish, did object to the sheets on the ground that they were just like the theayter.

As this gentleman of Scotch-Irish extraction was an elder, and his consent to the curtain was desirable, if not, indeed, necessary, it seemed that there might be a hitch until Miss Nannie suggested the borrowing of two of the McTavishes for a tableau.

"If they hesitate," she said to Virginia, who was sent

on the errand, "tell Mrs. McTavish we want the prettiest children on the prairie for 'Early Piety.'"

Miss Nannie knew the human heart. When this message was delivered to the mother she capitulated, and even agreed to bring Mr. McTavish around.

"You say all they 've got to do is to kneel down by the one that 's actin' the mother, like they was sayin' their prayers? Well! there shorely can't be anything wrong in that!" And the happy choice of actors and subject won the day.

The good lady circulated it industriously around the neighborhood that "Mr. McTavish he did n't really believe in tablux" (she had learned it that way long ago, and, being Scotch, could n't unlearn it); "but they said over to the school that they just had to have the prettiest young ones on the prairie, and so their pa he give in."

"Prettiest young ones, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Tigerman, when this was repeated to her. "Everybody knows them young ones ain't as pretty as mine! But, of course,"—with the injured air of one who has a grievance always on tap,—"the Trevilians would n't want *my* children for their show!"

The indifference of the Trevilians to her and hers was the "Mordecai at the king's gate" to Mrs. Tigerman.

The tableaux had been Miss Nannie's suggestion, and she threw herself, heart and soul, into their successful presentation. She sent for Matt Dawson to come out from Independence to help, and the Trevilian garret was ransacked. Silks and brocades were brought out that had not seen the light since Miss Nannie had worn them in Richmond.

They went over one day to see the Bascom girls and find out what could be secured there. These ladies, Miss Tiny and Miss Tony, were verging upon fifty, but they

were always called the " Bascom girls," because they had been girls once and had never changed their state.

They enjoyed a distinction all their own in the primitive community from the fact that they had a brother in the regular army. That seemed to set them apart from everybody else, even in a community where every fourth man was a colonel or a major or at least a captain. The Mexican War had left behind it a goodly number of officers—so many, in fact, that one could not help wondering sometimes why all the mortality had been among the privates or non-commissioned; but a brother in the regular army—that was different.

There were other things that helped to put the Bascom girls in *bas relief,* as it were. In the first place, they were Episcopalians, and the only ones on the prairie. And then they were so intensely Virginian. Many in the neighborhood were from the Old Dominion, it is true; but most of them had occasional lapses of memory in regard to it. Not so Miss Tiny and Miss Tony.

They never forgot. They never allowed anybody else to forget. Of course, Jackson County was a land flowing with milk and honey in comparison with their native State. But it was not Virginia, they mourned. They had come to the West because their brother George, with whom they made their home in the helpless fashion of the age, had chosen to migrate. They came under protest; they remained under protest. They buried their brother in Missouri, feeling that it was foreign soil, and they said of themselves passionately, as did Jacob of old, " Bury me with my fathers."

Each sister had put away in a secure place the money that would insure her a final resting-place in Virginia's sacred soil. (Beverly, the scamp, called it their " post-mortem transportation.") Each had taken a vow of the other, as did Joseph of the children of Israel, saying,

"God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence."

Even the Bascom girls got out their relics for the Grand Prairie tableaux, contributing a cherished suit of the colonel who was in the regular army.

"I hope you won't ask for the sword, my dear," said Miss Tiny, firmly, seeing Miss Nannie's eyes fastened covetously on that sheathed weapon above the mantel. "That was presented to our brother Jeems for bravery at Buena Vista. He hung it there with his own hands, and sister and I have sworn that it shall never come down."

"Oh, certainly not," said Miss Nannie, hastily. "I should n't think of such a thing. I would not ask for the suit for anybody but Gordon Lay. But he will be here in time for the tableaux, and we do need the epaulets so."

"Yes," said Miss Tiny. "Gordon is a gentlemanly lad. His father is a Kentuckian, I believe, but he is a very nice man."

"In spite of it," laughed Matt Dawson, a moment later, when the two sisters had pattered off to the garret to get the suit. Matt was also a Kentuckian.

Several little complications had arisen about the cast of characters.

Of course they had "Rebecca Offering the Jewels to Rowena." A set of tableaux in that day without that particular one would have seemed as incomplete as living pictures to-day without a Gibson girl. When it came to disposing of the characters, everybody could see at once who should be the *Lady Rowena.* Lois Chandler, the girl with the golden hair, was of the pure Saxon type.

"But she has nobody to fix her up," objected Miss Abby, as they considered the matter one night in family

conclave. Lois's mother was dead, and she would have been no good at tableaux if she had been living.

"She would make a magnificent *Rowena,*" mused Miss Nannie. "I think we will have to have her. I will fix her up myself—in my blue satin, with a string of pearls around her neck."

"The blue satin you wore to the governor's ball, Aunt Nan? Oh, won't she be stunning!" and Miss Abby corrected her for her misuse of language.

"It is n't a misuse," persisted Virginia. "I can just see her now! She 'll be perfectly gorgeous, Miss Abby."

When it came to *Rebecca,* there was a balk. Rene Taggart would have done finely for a Jewess, but Rene was long ago out of the ring. Mollie Driscoll agreed to take the part until she learned that *Rebecca* would have to kneel at the feet of the Saxon beauty.

"Do you suppose I 'm going to kneel to that Chandler girl?" she said indignantly to Virginia. "Well, I think I see myself! Why can't *Rowena* kneel to *Rebecca?*"

There was a derisive shout at this from the lovers of Scott, and Mollie turned off in deep resentment.

It ended in Virginia, who was a brunette and had no scruples of dignity about doing anything that needed to be done, being *Rebecca.*

"Virge, I am glad you have some sense!" said Miss Nannie. "I hate these people that are always pulling back." But she found that Virginia could pull back when the time came.

The boys got there four days before the exhibition,—long enough for needed rehearsals and several delightful scampers around the neighborhood together on urgent errands. Virginia was glad that her essay was finished even to putting in the blue ribbons, for there was precious little time for anything now.

Gordon and Beverly looked quite metropolitan in their clothes of newest cut, and both had taken on the indescribable something which betokened that childish things were put away forever now. Beverly looked quite settled, Sallie said. And Gordon!

"What do you think of it, anyway?" she asked Virginia. "The mustache, I mean."

They had all gone down to the grape-vine tree.

The two girls were swinging gently back and forth, Beverly at their feet and Gordon standing with his hand on the old vine that had seen them all grow up.

Sallie spoke as impersonally as if she were discussing a graven image.

"I like it," returned Virginia, as frankly, looking straight into Sallie's eyes. "It makes him look almost like a grown-up man." And she flashed a mocking look at the owner of the mustache.

He raised his hat. "Ah-h! Perhaps when he has a full beard he may be able to suggest a book for a young lady to read."

"What are you two talking about?" said Sallie.

Of course they had "Pocahontas Saving the Life of John Smith." That was a foregone conclusion. Virginia was to be the Indian maiden; Gordon, the redoubtable *John;* and Beverly, *Powhatan.* Almost the whole school were braves or squaws of assorted sizes. Everybody wanted to be wild for once. All went well till the time of rehearsal came. Then Virginia, with a sudden realization of the embarrassment of *Pocahontas's* position, declined to save anybody unless it could be Beverly.

"Virginia Trevilian, how silly!" cried Miss Nannie in exasperation. She had taken her off in a corner to reason with her, while Beverly lowered his tomahawk and

Gordon sat up, never once looking toward the corner. "Why, Gordon Lay is just like your brother!"

"Aunt Nan," said Virginia, "I'm not going to do it! Now!"

And Miss Nannie knew she would n't.

With Beverly for the endangered captain, Virginia played *Pocahontas* with the utmost abandon; and Gordon Lay, standing over them with the tomahawk, wished he were *John Smith,* but liked Virginia all the better because he was not.

CHAPTER XIV

SELECT READINGS

THE church was packed. It was not often that anything approaching a "theayter" was to be seen on Grand Prairie. The word had gone forth that this might be mistaken for it, and the rumor of curtains and sheeted dressing-rooms piqued curiosity. Everybody was there.

The exhibition was almost over,—and over with credit. Sallie's "Maniac" was magnificent. It scared the young McTavishes almost into fits. *Rebecca* and *Rowena* had set more than two manly hearts to thumping with their ravishing beauty.

Colonel Trevilian and Dr. Lay sat side by side and congratulated each other, as the entertainment progressed, that they had such an up-to-date teacher. This would make next year's patronage certain.

But the end was not yet. Miss Abby had prepared a pleasant surprise for the people of Grand Prairie.

The last number on the program was "Come to the Old Oak Tree." As the rhythmic notes rolled on with a swing and a dash that set all the young feet in the church to keeping time, Miss Abby was having a last whispered word in the dressing-room with Lois Chandler, in white muslin and blue ribbons.

"You are sure you can do it?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Lois, in pleased anticipation. She had said to Beverly at the door, where they had stopped to talk: "You just wait! You 'll be surprised at something!" There was such a note of exultation in her voice

that Beverly had been wondering all evening what she meant.

When the song ended, the singers took their places in the audience, Miss Nannie and Matt Dawson went to folding up dresses behind the curtain, and Miss Abby stepped to the front.

"I thought this was to be the last," whispered Gordon to Virginia.

"Why, it was! I don't— Hush!"

For Miss Abby was speaking.

"Ladies and gentlemen:"—

Mr. Singleton had announced the program, and the sound of a woman's voice was most startling in a community long used to the dictum: "Let your women keep silence in the churches." Miss Nannie stopped to listen.

"Ladies and gentlemen: Our program will conclude with a few select readings from a book that is read to-day throughout the civilized world,—one that has been translated into many languages, and bids fair to rival the Bible in its circulation. Miss Lois Chandler will give you a few choice selections from 'Uncle Tom's Cabin!'"

"Uncle Tom's Cabin!" a book that was to the South at that time like a red rag to a bull!

"Well, did you *ever!*" said Miss Nannie, dropping the blue satin and sitting down on the pulpit steps.

If a bomb-shell had exploded in Hickory Grove church there might have been more danger, but not greater surprise. There was hardly a man in that audience that was not a slave-owner, and up-stairs in the gallery, enjoying the exhibition to the full, were the slaves.

There was a hush that presages a storm, and then Mr. Caldwell and his family, who were from South Carolina, rose and marched out. Mr. Pasco followed suit. But most of them stood fire—possibly because they had, deep

in their hearts, a curiosity to know how it would turn out and what the "readings" would be.

"Did you know anything about this?" asked Dr. Lay of Colonel Trevilian.

"Certainly not!" he said sternly. "The woman is beside herself!"

But there was method in Miss Abby's madness. She had thought out this plan with her accustomed thoroughness. She looked upon "Uncle Tom's Cabin" as the book of the century; and she had discovered with unbounded astonishment that it was not read in the South, —at least in this part of it. She had not found on all Grand Prairie one person that had given it a hearing except Dr. Lay.

She had put it into Virginia's hands one day, whence it came promptly back to her *via* Mrs. Trevilian, who told her, with the gentle dignity that never left room for argument, that she would rather Virginia would get her ideas of slavery from real life than from fiction. She had offered to lend it to Miss Nannie, who had said with scorn:

"*No;* I won't read it! It's nothing but a pack of lies!"

"How can you tell if you haven't read it?" Miss Abby asked, with some show of logic.

"I know from the people that like it!" said Miss Nannie.

It was this attitude of Southern people toward "Uncle Tom's Cabin" that had determined Miss Abby upon her course of action to-night. Such a book as this ought to be brought before them! She felt that she could do no better missionary work than to become the humble instrument in the hands of Providence to do it. Of course it would be better if they would read the whole book; but if they would n't, even fragments properly presented

would be better than nothing. Probably they would become so interested that they would seek to pursue the subject afterward. Miss Abby, it will be observed, while a thoroughly good woman, was lacking in that quality of the imagination which enables one to enter into the life and feelings of others. If she had possessed it, even in small measure, she would hardly have entered upon so perilous an undertaking as this.

To the proper presentation she had given her full strength, writing out a clear-cut synopsis of the story from one selection to the next, which Lois memorized and gave as prelude and interlude. That synopsis, though brief, missed none of Miss Abby's points.

The first selection was Eliza's escape with her child. There was a skilful abbreviation that told the gist of the story—the sale, the flight, the pursuit, the escape. Lois was a natural elocutionist, and she had been trained for this hour. Moreover, she was new to the platform, and supposed that the intense interest on the faces before her was due to her rendition of the piece. Stimulated by this, she threw her whole soul into it. She was finishing it now.

"Right on behind they came," she declaimed, her color rising with the excitement of the theme and the breathless attention of the audience; "and nerved with strength such as God gives only to the desperate, with one wild and flying leap she vaulted sheer over the turbid current by the shore, on to the raft of ice beyond. It was a desperate leap,—impossible to anything but madness and despair.

"The huge green fragment of ice on which she alighted pitched and creaked as her weight came on it, but she stayed not there a moment. With wild cries and desperate energy she leaped to another and still another cake:—stumbling—leaping—slipping—springing upward again!"

"What in de name er God is she talkin' about?" whispered Mammy to Liz up in the gallery. "An' what 's de matter wid de white folks?"

"Her shoes were gone," the young elocutionist concluded with dramatic intensity; "her stockings cut from her feet, while the blood marked every step; but she saw nothing, felt nothing, till, dimly as in a dream, she saw the Ohio side, and a man helping her up the bank."

She stopped and made a slight bow, a smile of pleased anticipation on her lips. Not a sound broke the stillness. There had been generous applause before for every number. Now there was silence.

With a perplexed look at her audience and a half-appealing one toward Miss Abby, Lois proceeded with the story—Uncle Tom's journey down the river. the meeting with St. Clair and little Eva, and the coming of Miss Ophelia.

The next reading was the kitchen scene between that lady and Dinah,—one of the best in the book, for this is true to life. A deadly suspicion was fastening upon Lois that something was wrong. She was glad that this was a humorous selection. But it did n't seem humorous to Grand Prairie! They had seen such kitchens too often to perceive anything funny in them or a portrayal of them. And when the choice of this humorous sketch was made by one who had not spared criticism of such kitchens, it became doubly offensive.

The next extract (for Miss Abby had been remarkably conservative—she was saving her strength for the finale) was the death of little Eva, which has brought tears to the eyes of countless thousands, even when divorced from the extraneous excitement of two Markses, a double Topsy, and bloodhounds galore;—but by this time the audience was so hot that they did not care whether Eva lived or died.

Lois threw a despairing glance toward the pew where Beverly, flushed and uneasy, sat. He could not resist the appeal, and a solitary hand-clap smote the stillness. It was not followed. The reader was "damned with faint praise," and in a voice that quavered slightly she announced her last selection—"The Death of Uncle Tom."

"Oh, heavens!" groaned Dr. Lay. "Now we shall have Cass and Legree and all that!"

But they were spared Legree. Before she had gone further, Colonel Trevilian rose with courtly dignity, and, after a kindly tribute to the speaker's powers that brought a ghost of a smile to Lois's quivering lips, remarked that, the hour being late, and most of them having some distance to go, he would suggest that they postpone the death and burial of their lamented friend until a more convenient season. Whereupon, Mr. Singleton, taking the cue, rose immediately and announced that the program was ended.

The buzz began as they went out. Mr. Swamscott, who was also from Virginia, remarked dryly to Colonel Trevilian:

"Well, Colonel, I reckon she is a little too smart for us!"

Inside, Lois Chandler was sobbing in Miss Nannie Trevilian's lap. And Miss Nannie cuddled her, indignant as she was.

It was n't the child's fault!

CHAPTER XV

WHEN HEARTS ARE YOUNG

THE "Select Readings" proved a boomerang. Miss Abby was hardest hit of all,—for it settled irrevocably the question of next year. Grand Prairie did not propose to pay for this kind of thing!

Even Miss Abby saw that after her conversation with Colonel Trevilian.

He took her in his carriage to Kansas City, where she was met by her brother. Dr. Cheever had gathered enough from her letter to fill him with dismay.

"Such ill-judged zeal!" he sighed to himself. "Why will they do it!"

Dr. Cheever's principles were identical with Miss Abby's, but they were tempered by judgment and tact.

"I regret this exceedingly, Colonel," he said as the two sat together in the parlor of the old Gillis House. "If I had only known she contemplated such a thing, I think I could have forestalled it. But I knew nothing of it whatever. I can't wonder at all that your people should have felt just as they did. . . . But I trust, sir, that it will make no difference in my own relations with yourself and your family,—which, I assure you, have been among the most pleasant of my life."

"He was so earnest in saying it," Colonel Trevilian said in reporting the interview, "that I could not doubt the man's sincerity. I believe he is genuinely attached to us."

They were all out on the porch, and Gordon was watching Virginia as she listened to her father. He would have

given a good deal just then to have had his finger on her pulse.

"I think I'll write to him and give him a special invitation to come and see us this summer," said Mrs. Trevilian; "just to show him that we don't bear this up against him."

"Do, mother!" cried Virginia. And Gordon's spirits fell. He hardly believed she cared for this New Englander, but true love is ever self-depreciative and fearful of the possible.

Miss Abby was not the only one hurt in the recoil of her weapon. Public censure fell heavily on Lois Chandler. The affair was much talked of in the neighborhood, and in a way that brought the girl into undesirable and most unjust prominence. It was such a bold thing for a girl to do, they said! Anything might be expected from one who had no more sense of propriety than that! But then, what *could* you expect from a girl raised as Lois Chandler had been, etc., etc.

Its effects were farther-reaching than anybody would have dreamed possible. It is a great pity for a young girl—particularly one as pretty as Lois Chandler—to be held up before a community as bold. The Trevilians, who knew how innocently she had been led into it, had constantly to take up the cudgels in her defense. Beverly raged inwardly at the position in which she was placed, but said nothing. He knew he would say too much if he said anything.

But Gordon Lay, with his strict love of justice, was outspoken in her behalf, particularly to Mollie Driscoll, saying more than he had meant to say about her sweetness of disposition, her simple-heartedness and other charms—Mollie always provoked one to take the other side rather violently. And Mollie, having the retentive memory that sometimes goes with a small soul and a

limited discernment of motives, did not forget his words.

If Beverly did not say much, it was not for want of feeling. It had been in his heart, when he came back this summer, to try to introduce Lois into the merrymakings that he knew they would have. As he had thought over it in Virginia, it seemed an easy thing to do. If they knew her as he did, they would all see how different she was from her father and her surroundings. And when the curtain had risen that night on Lois as the *Lady Rowena,* looking so stately and high-born in her blue-satin gown, and accepting so graciously the casket from Virginia's hand as though it were her right, his heart throbbed with exultant pride and hope. They would all see now that she would grace any assemblage—any home, he thought, with a quickening of the pulse.

This would make it easier, for they could not fail to see. If he could only once get Lois *in,* he felt no fear that she would not be able to hold her place. He would get the boys to help him—Gordon would, he knew; and he and Gordon could pretty nearly make things go their way on Grand Prairie,—and he recalled with a smile the time they had set out to make Rene Taggart a "belle," and succeeded. Of course they did that in fun; but there was no reason why it could not be done in earnest. When he thought of the girls he was less confident. Girls were queer. One never knew what stand they would take. The only thing you could count on was that they would hold it when it was taken. Well, he would try to bring Virginia over to his side. If Virginia and Sallie would only take her up, it would be all right. But this was before the "Select Readings." Now, he thought gloomily, that was all over!

They had a gay time that summer on Grand Prairie, and the heart of it was at Keswick, for Lide Merriweather

was visiting Virginia from Lafayette County, and Tom Caruthers had come on from Virginia to spend the summer with his Missouri "kin." Then Matt Delano and a friend came out from Independence to spend a month, and they had a house-party most of the time. Ca'line was busy enough now to have satisfied even Miss Abby, and there seemed little probability that any of Mrs. Trevilian's five hundred chickens would reach the winter market.

Sallie and Virginia and Mollie Driscoll were through school now, and the emancipation was thorough. Girls did not take themselves very seriously in the fifties—that is to say, in Missouri. Perhaps they did in New England even then. In the South, a girl's young-ladyhood was her time of florescence. Nobody expected fruit then. But what a beautiful flowering it was!

Sometimes Gordon Lay wished that Virginia did not have so many summer friends, and thought with regret of the days when they had roamed along the creek banks and gathered pawpaws. He felt this specially after Tom Caruthers came. Tom was Virginia's cousin, of course, and it was natural enough that he should be fond of her. It was not strange that anybody should, for that matter; but the depressing part of it was that Virginia also seemed fond of Tom. And what any girl could see in Tom Caruthers!

Gordon was riding home from Colonel Trevilian's alone. Sallie was going to stay all night with the girls, and he was glad of it! he said to himself savagely. Sallie's chatter was enough to tire a man out! He gave Damon a sudden touch of the whip, which was meant figuratively for garrulous females, but was taken as a personal affront by Damon, who was a strictly silent male and resented this misapplication of rewards and punishments.

Now the real cause of Gordon's discontent was not Sallie at all, but Virginia.

"She has the most confoundedly cool way of disposing of everybody!" he ejaculated. "I had made up my mind that I was going with her to that barbecue and let Tom Caruthers go to thunder, when what does she do but whip in ahead and say: 'Gordon, Lide does n't like to ride horseback. Suppose you and brother take the two girls —Sallie and Lide—in our carriage. Tom and I will ride.' That 's the way it always goes *this* summer. 'Tom and I' always ride! I 'll be glad when it 's time to go back to Transylvania! There 's no use hanging around here."

At this very moment Sallie was saying to Virginia as she took down her hair and combed out the abundant auburn tresses:

"Virge, I thought I 'd *die* when you headed Gordon off! You knew he intended to go with you. I know that young man is just raging."

"'Let the heathen rage,'" quoted Virginia. "I reckon I don't belong to Mr. Gordon Lay."

"He 'd like for you to," said Sallie. Then she added doubtfully—at heart she was very loyal to her cousin: "Virge, do you really care anything for Tom Caruthers?"

"Yes!" Virginia blew out the candle and jumped into bed. "I 'm dead in love with him. He 's so much more polished than the Missouri boys. Tell Gordon I said so."

"He would rage then, sure enough!"

"Tell him, Sallie, and see. We 'll watch him at the barbecue."

And they whispered and giggled and plotted wickedly until Colonel Trevilian knocked on the floor of the room below. They knew that meant stop.

This was in the summer of 1860. The Independence girls went home after a while, but Lide had concluded to stay another month. Sallie and Gordon being but a mile away, a sextet was always available, and they certainly

did have good times in spite of gathering war clouds and the muttering of thunder. Virginia and Sallie and Lide had hardly caught the rumble of the storm yet, but the boys had. They were men now, and when they were not off with the girls they were on the porch listening to Colonel Trevilian and Dr. Lay.

The two old friends were much together that summer. It was a time when man sought counsel of man. The very atmosphere was charged with foreboding, and it made one restless to be alone. Almost every afternoon Dr. Lay could be seen ambling up the road from the Trevilian "big gate." Then the Colonel would call for a mint-julep, and over the cracked ice and the savory infusion they would discuss the situation. Men were doing it all over the land that year, and nowhere with more vital interest than in Missouri.

Mrs. Trevilian and Miss Nannie would bring out their work sometimes, and listen, not saying much, but promptly alining themselves where their sympathies naturally led them. Sometimes Mrs. Trevilian would look at her husband with a quick, warning glance, but the doctor never took offense.

"I tell you, sir," cried Colonel Trevilian one day, bringing his fist down on the broad arm of his porch chair, "if Lincoln is elected it will split this nation in two! The South will never submit to such an indignity!"

"The South may not be able to help herself," replied the doctor, quietly. "You don't expect the North to sit by and see the Union disrupted and say nothing, do you?"

"There are not men and money enough in this nation, sir, to subjugate the South!"

"It will be a sorry day for her when the issue is forced. The South can't compete with the North."

"'Thrice armed he is that hath his quarrel just,'" his host returned.

"But look here, Colonel—" And then the straw would all be threshed over again, and Mrs. Trevilian would go into the parlor where the young people were and try to throw off the depression brought on by such talk.

"Maybe it won't come, after all," she would think, looking at the three stalwart young men so full of hope and the joy of life. But if it should come—would mothers hold them? . . . Ah! what targets they would make for rifle-balls!

Then there would be a burst of laughter or the merry chatter of girls' voices, with an occasional note of bass, and she would put it all from her and enter into the spirit of the present, saying to herself: "Oh, no, it won't come! I'm very foolish!"

Such rollicking times as they had! There were picnics over on the Snai, and fishing-parties on Little Blue,—and what did it matter that these streams were far away? The ride was the best part of the picnic, anyway, especially the one home in the gloaming, when the sun had just gone down and the heavens were filled with the glory of his passing, and they rode, with bated breath and laughter hushed, through

"The light that never was, on sea or land."

Then there were riding-parties when the whole neighborhood of young people would congregate, a score or more at some appointed place, and, forming a procession, would sweep over the prairies at a gallop, with jest and laughter and ringing shout,—the very prairies over which, in two years, "night-birds" would be scurrying and hostile bands hunting each other to the death. Aye! when even among this care-free crowd would be hunter and hunted! May God be thanked for an open present and a hidden future!

They did not race often, but sometimes they did even this, for in the veins of many on that prairie ran the Kentucky blood. It is a thousand wonders there were not more accidents; for the girls wore riding-habits with skirts down to their horses' heels,—the longer the better, —and would have been as helpless in an accident as a babe in swaddling-clothes.

It was on one of these occasions, when the blood of the old fox-hunting squires got the better of their discretion, that Gordon saved Virginia from a frightful death. Virginia never forgot that moment in which she lay in his arms—more, perhaps, thoughtless girl! for what it revealed to her than what it saved her from.

This was the way it happened:

She and Tom Caruthers, Gordon, and a girl from Lexington who was visiting Mollie Driscoll, had started ahead of the others for a race, Virginia, as usual, offering the dare and being in the lead. The four swept past the other couples, and were going at what seemed to the Lexington girl frightful speed, when Gordon saw a broken girth swing out from the horse in front of him. That horse was Rob Roy.

There was no time for warning—no time for anything. He gave Damon a stinging blow that put him alongside of Virginia's horse. The girl swayed with a white, terror-stricken face. She realized in one awful moment what had happened, and what it would mean with all that mad troop behind.

At that instant, Gordon dropped his bridle, reached over, caught her in his arms, and lifted her to his horse's neck. He was a powerful fellow and quick to think. The riderless horse dashed on. Both horses did, in fact, for Damon had not recovered from his indignant astonishment at a blow. But Virginia was safe in Gordon's arms.

When the others came up, the two were on the ground, Gordon silently patting Damon's neck, and Virginia trying to think how it happened.

"By Jove! it was the neatest thing I ever saw done!" Tom Caruthers exclaimed with genuine admiration. "I did n't know a thing had happened till I saw Virginia spirited to your horse's neck. Why, it was like the rape of the Sabines."

He wrung Gordon's hand and said warmly, as Virginia and the Lexington girl talked in unison, trying to tell each other how they felt:

"My dear fellow, I can't begin to express—"

"Don't try," interrupted Gordon, rather coldly. "Any man would have done the same."

And it was n't necessary for them to tell each other how they felt.

With Virginia's horse still galloping in the distance and her saddle in the dust behind them, there was nothing for her to do but to get up behind Gordon, who had the only horse that would carry double, and be conveyed to the nearest house, which, fortunately, was Dr. Lay's. There he could get her a new mount and they could proceed with the party or go back home as she wished.

"I believe I 'll go back home," Virginia said. "Mag, you tell them I 'm all right—but—I want mother."

Then Tom took Virginia's foot and lifted her up behind Gordon, and Gordon buttoned his coat, and Damon acted like sin,—and Virginia had a hard time to hold on, and was nervous, anyway, and Gordon kept saying:

"Hold tight, Virge! I don't know what makes him act this way."

They reached Dr. Lay's at last, and while Gordon saw to the horse and sent a man back for the saddle, Virginia told the story to sweet, gentle Mrs. Lay and Sallie's mother, Mrs. Devereau.

"It was God's mercy, my child!" said Mrs. Lay, solemnly.

"I don't know," Virginia said softly. "I think—it was Gordon."

To Sallie next day she said: "Suppose it had been Dr. Cheever instead of Gordon! I hardly think God's mercy could have saved me then."

And Sallie, who was unusually sober for her, replied: "Maybe it was God's mercy that put Gordon there."

The two rode home to Keswick a little later, when the stars were coming out, one by one, and the great golden disk of the moon was just appearing above the horizon. It was rather a silent ride. Both hearts were full. They could not talk just now of commonplace things, nor laugh and jest. They had not quite emerged from that shadow of averted death.

And Gordon could feel her in his arms yet!

CHAPTER XVI

IN WHICH BEVERLY SUPPOSES A CASE

THE next day after this exploit and its happy termination, Miss Nannie sat out on the long piazza on the east side of the ell. A clematis had been trained from post to post, and the great purple clusters hung down in drooping profusion. Had they been a little deeper in color, a little more tinged with the blood of the vine, they might have passed as the grapes of Eshcol,—so perfect were they in shape.

The young folks were down at the grape-vine tree,—all except Beverly, who had been off riding somewhere and had just thrown himself, whip in hand, on the broad step at Miss Nannie's feet. She was reading "The New York Observer," but she put it aside to talk to him, and took up the roll of embroidery on her lap.

"Aunt Nan," he said abruptly, after they had talked of the riding-party of the night before and Virginia's escape, and of the barbecue that was to be. "Why is it that Lois Chandler is never invited to any of these things?"

"She does n't belong to your crowd," said Miss Nannie, under the impression, apparently, that that answered the question in full.

"But why does n't she belong to our crowd? That is the very thing I am asking. We 've always known her. The girls went to school with her. She 's a neighbor. She belongs to our church—"

"Only because there is no Congregational church for

them to go to. They were Congregationalists before they came here."

"Why, Aunt Nan, Lois Chandler was *born* here. She is a Missourian, just as Virginia is."

"Well,—she 's a Yankee, just the same."

"I thought Dr. Cheever had cured you of your prejudice against Yankees."

"There are Yankees and Yankees, Beverly. Dr. Cheever is a cultivated, educated gentleman. But the Chandlers—"

"Mr. Chandler is a graduate of Yale College."

"Old man Chandler!"

"Yes'm. He told me so himself."

"Why, Beverly, he was down South as an overseer!"

"I know it. He told me that, too."

Miss Nannie looked at him with embarrassing directness. "It seems to me, he 's been telling you a good many things. When did you and old man Chandler get so thick?"

"He went down South when he was a young man," he said, ignoring her bantering remark, "with the idea of being a sort of missionary among the negroes, and he started in as an overseer."

"Good judgment!" she commented.

"Well, he did n't know how it was going to be,—and then he gave that up and came up here and went to farming."

"He does n't seem to have made much use of his education."

"Perhaps not. But, Aunt Nan, I 'm not talking about Mr. Chandler"—it struck Miss Nannie that there was something strange in his not saying "old man Chandler," as usual, but she let it pass—"I 'm talking about Lois. She is a nice, refined girl, and I can't see why she is n't taken in with the rest of the girls. I think it is a

shame!" He was so impotent that he felt hot and indignant.

Miss Nannie stitched on imperturbably.

"Beverly, you can't force these matters. They regulate themselves. People find their own level in any community, and the level of an overseer's child—even an ex-overseer's—is a different one from that of your father's daughter, naturally. Besides," she continued after a moment's thought, "it would be no kindness to Lois Chandler to bring her into associations that could ultimately bring her only sorrow and disappointment."

"What do you mean?" He paused in his work of snipping off the heads of the pretty-by-nights with his whip, and looked up at her with genuine curiosity.

"I mean," she said, "if I must be so plain, that young people who would never under any circumstances think of marriage had better not be associated very closely. You never know where these things are going to end."

"And why—" began Beverly, with heat, and then he stopped—prudence coming to the rescue. "Aunt Nan, let 's suppose a case—just for the sake of argument."

"Very well. Present your case."

"Suppose Gordon Lay, we will say, well born, well bred, and well educated as he is, should fall in love with Lois Chandler and want to marry her. Now,—*why* should n't he do it? . . . It is *his* life! . . . Why should n't he live it as he wants to? and why should n't he associate with it any other life that he wants to?"

He spoke so impetuously, so as if it were a real cause he was advocating, that Miss Nannie laid down her work to answer.

"For one thing, because he owes something to his family. If he is well born and well bred and well educated, as you say, they, it is to be supposed, have made him so; and he owes it to them to give them a daughter

of whom they need never be ashamed. I don't know how Dr. Lay would feel," she broke off to say; "but I can tell you such a marriage would be a bitter pill to *your* father! You could n't strike him in a more vital spot than in his family pride!"

He stooped over and pulled up a spear of grass, waiting for her to go on, which she did.

"And then a man owes it to his children to give them a mother that shall be able to make them what his mother has made him. It must be a source of great unhappiness to a man to be continually contrasting his wife with his mother, to the wife's disparagement. But he must do it if he marries beneath him."

"But if he loves her—"

"Oh, *love* is n't everything, Beverly. Certainly puppy love is n't! Though I should hardly think that Gordon Lay would ever be carried away with—"

"I did n't say he was. I only said *suppose* he should want to marry her."

"There is another reason. Such a marriage would never bring happiness to him,—leaving his family out of the matter entirely. Her want of cultivation would be continually thrusting itself upon him. He would come to be ashamed of her mistakes and her social shortcomings. It would be a very strong woman that could hold a man under those circumstances. Lois Chandler never could! It would be a bitter day for Gordon when he woke up."

"But if he loved her," he protested, "he would have patience to teach her and bring her up to his social level."

"It is safer to take one that is already taught," remarked Miss Nannie, astutely. "The teaching is apt to be a trying process to both if it comes after marriage. Such a person seldom realizes her own deficiencies, and her husband's well-meant instruction she might mistake

for nagging. There would be a great chance for unhappiness there."

"Oh, these little social conventionalities!" began Beverly, impatiently. "What do they amount to, anyway?"

"I 'm not talking about little social conventionalities. I feel about many of those things just as you do. Some people seem to feel that the sum total of culture is to eat with your fork and sip soup from the side of a spoon instead of the end! I 'll grant that such things can be acquired by *anybody* with very little effort. But good breeding goes deeper than that! And one of its best fruits—one that can't be taken on with any veneer——is a nice sense of the proprieties of life. It teaches a girl what to say and how to say it; what to do and when to do it (and, above all, when not to do it); it teaches her what to think, what to feel. After generations of this kind of thing, right thinking, right feeling, and right acting become instinctive,—and it is really never very good breeding until it *is* instinctive."

She paused a moment and then went on.

"Now take this case of Lois and her readings, that there has been so much said about since the exhibition. I don't think, myself, that Lois was a particle to blame in that matter. She did what Miss Abby told her to do, without a thought that she was doing anything out of the way."

"Of course she did!" he replied eagerly. "It was all Miss Abby's fault. It is ridiculous the way people blame Lois for that!"

"Yes, it is—I agree with you about that;—but, Beverly, a really well-bred girl would have seen the impropriety of it, even if Miss Abby did n't. And you have never heard me say that I considered Miss Abby a model. She was strong in mathematics, but she was weak in social

perception, or she would never have tried to give us that dose of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'"

Beverly flicked the pretty-by-nights relentlessly. He thought he could see the drift of this.

"Well,—the point I want to make is this: Virginia—or Sallie, even, with all her love of fun—would never have done what Lois did. They would have seen at once that it was not the thing to do. And there is where Lois will always be at a disadvantage, and where she would many times be a source of mortification to a man like Gordon Lay."

They sat in silence after this, and then Miss Nannie, thinking that there had been enough of this serious talk, asked: "Who are you going to take to the barbecue?"

And it must be recorded that, after all her strictures upon Miss Abby, she said *who* where that lady would have said *whom*.

"Oh,—Sallie, I suppose," returned Beverly, gloomily.

As he rose to go, Miss Nannie stopped him. She had been going over in her mind the case he had supposed. "Beverly, you certainly don't mean that Gordon Lay is likely to become interested in Lois Chandler?"

She looked so distressed, and the supposition was so absurd, that the temptation to carry it on appealed irresistibly to his sense of humor.

"I know he likes her," he replied, with a non-committal air of gravity that implied ability to tell more if he thought it wise to tell; "and, as you say, one never can tell where these things will end."

He likes her! It may mean much or little, and Miss Nannie took it to mean much. She pondered over it when her nephew was sauntering toward the grape-vine tree. Gordon certainly had been very outspoken in his defense of Lois whenever the affair of the "Select Readings" was brought up, but—

"My! what a shock that would be to his family!" Then she shook her head slowly and knit her brows. "I always thought . . . that some day . . . Gordon and Virginia would—"—the perplexity in her face turned to cunning determination—"I believe—I will give Virginia a hint of this—just a hint. . . . I would hate to see her give her affections—where—*oh, pshaw!* I don't believe it!"

But she was believing a good deal more of it than Beverly ever intended she should, though she thought better of speaking to her niece about it.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BARBECUE

THE barbecue was to be at Lone Jack, a modest little hamlet of one street, taking its name from a solitary oak (a black-jack) which stood near the roadside. Under its spreading branches were dug, two years from that August day, two trenches side by side. In one was laid the Federal, in the other the Confederate dead—some of the very men who strolled over the grounds today, chatting and joking with the friends and neighbors and brothers they fought to the death that day. It was a bloody fight. The old black-jack did its best, but it could not give a shadow from the heat for all who lay beneath it when the sun went down.

But the barbecue was on the other side, over by the grove, and nobody foresaw what the old tree was to witness in two short years.

Perhaps it was the social instinct fostered by the barbecue that gave direction to the commemoration of that sanguinary day, for certain it is that for forty years the Lone Jack picnic on the sixteenth of August, the day of the battle, has been a county institution.

To it come wagon-loads of farmers with their families and their baskets, jolly parties of merrymakers from the neighboring towns, politicians with axes that can be sharpened here in a lump, and not least—oh, no, not least—the dwellers on Snai.

It was precisely this concourse that made up the bar-

becue of 1860. Two congressional candidates were stumping the district, and a gathering like this was too good an opportunity to miss. Everybody wanted to have his candidate's position clearly defined in '60. No man would be away who could get there.

The Keswick crowd arrived just before noon—they had a long way to go and had driven at a leisurely gait. As had been planned, Beverly and Sallie, Gordon and Lide Merriweather rode in the carriage, with Uncle Reuben in the driver's seat and a generous hamper of provisions at his feet.

"You-all won't like barbecue fare," Mrs. Trevilian had said. "Aunt Viny will fix you up something."

At the last moment it was decided that it was too warm for horseback-riding, and Virginia and Tom followed in the buggy at a safe distance to avoid the dust. One member of the carriage-load looked back at every turn to see if they were in sight. "What do you keep looking out for?" asked Lide.

"I feel a little afraid of this tire," said Gordon, in some confusion. He spoke in a low tone so that Uncle Reuben should not hear him.

"Dat tire 's all right, Marse Gordon, sir. Hit 's de buggy whar de danger is."

There was a peal of laughter at Gordon's expense, and Uncle Reuben drove a full mile trying to see where the laugh came in. The buggy did have a loose tire, and the carriage did n't! But "white folks was awful fond of haw-hawin' "!

They all reached the place about the same time, and the three birds of brilliant hue shook out their ruffled plumage and chattered like magpies. A little later Colonel Trevilian rode up on Milo, his big iron-gray.

They would have time, they decided, to stroll around a little and see the lay of the land while Uncle Reuben

was attending to the horses and getting things ready for dinner.

Near the center of the grounds was the arbor, fashioned securely from stout hickory saplings, some of them of Nature's own planting, and the rest sunk deep in the black earth. To these supports were fastened transverse poles with smaller ones crossing them,—all held in place by hickory withes. Over the whole were laid leafy boughs, fresh-gathered, and the result was a cool and shady dancing-pavilion not to be scorned. Such a rustic pavilion is sometimes called in the West a "bowery," which gives it rather a rakish sound (particularly if the capital B is imagined); but, spelled as its derivation would suggest, a "boughery dance" is quite a harmless affair.

The arbor was large enough for nine sets at a time, and was always taxed to the utmost when the Lone Jack blood was up. The floor was leveled smooth as a tennis-court and covered with a thick carpet of sawdust. The men who had the work in charge protested against the waste of time and material in making it so thick, but old Bob Balentine knew what he was about. He had superintended the making of arbors a good many years for both dances and camp-meetings.

"Jes' you wait tell Hank Menafee and Bud Taggart git a-goin'," he said. "You 'll see! That Snai gang kicks up a heap er dust. Some of 'em don't know how to swing corners 'thout whirlin' the girls around two or three times and makin' their skirts stand out like balloons. No, sir; you can't git too much sawdust for the Snai gang —not for a dance!"

At one end of the arbor was a raised platform for Uncle Putney, the black fiddler, who from this elevation could make his stentorian voice heard to the remotest corner of the arbor. He was in his glory when the nine sets were all going and Bud Taggart was getting in his

best licks. Then he would literally rise to the occasion, standing up where he could survey the field, and issuing trumpet-calls to the whirling, stamping, rollicking crowd.

Around the arbor were placed rude benches, patronized by women past their dancing prime, who held their babies and looked enviously on, saying:

"Them figgers ain't near as pretty as the ones they had in our time. My! do you remember how Jim Force used to dance 'Tucker'? Bud Taggart ain't a patchin' to Jim! Why, Jim would kick sawdust till you would n't know but 't was a horse pawin'."

These benches were used occasionally too by tired belles who protested that they could not wag a foot till they had rested; but they and the envious ex-belles held possession. There was no provision at Lone Jack for chaperons—nor any need of it. The theory of the community was that "every dog should have his day," and the young people, who had every confidence and merited it, had all the liberty they wanted unhampered by elderly females.

It being early, the dancing was going on in a perfunctory sort of way which gave no hint of the height to which it would rise by three o'clock, and the Keswick party directed their steps to the banqueting-place, Colonel Trevilian acting as guide.

This was at the right of the arbor and a little way back. Long, narrow tables, formed of two boards supported by cross-pieces set in the ground, were planted under the shade of the hickories and oaks.

On either side were board benches similarly planted, over which the banqueters, male and female, deftly stepped to seat themselves.

"Let 's go where they are barbecuing," said Beverly. "Lide says she has never seen it done."

Back at some distance the cooks were busy. Luckily

they had nothing to do but to barbecue the meat, for that required not a little attention. Old man Collins was the prize barbecuer for the neighborhood, and he had plenty of assistants.

They had dug deep pits the day before and started fierce fires in them, feeding these with logs till they had a pit of solid coals. Over each of these inexhaustible broilers they had spitted the half of a beef,—Colonel Carter's best, they said, and Colonel Carter's poorest was good. The pole on which the beef was hung was suspended across two forked sticks at the ends of the pit, and the great roast was turned assiduously by attendants, who basted it with vinegar, pepper, and salt.

It was a tedious process, but the old-timers say there was never meat like it. It seems now that it must have taken a youthful appetite, plenty of outdoor air, a long ride, and a strong infusion of patriotism to make one see it so.

"Gordon," whispered Virginia, as the others watched the cooks, "who is that man over near the other pit? I don't believe he belongs around here."

It was a young man of twenty-three or -four, apparently, well dressed and gentlemanly in appearance. He was looking carelessly at the crowd as it surged now toward the tables.

"I never saw him before. Rather nice-looking, isn't he?"

"Ye-s."

Just then the man turned and looked straight at Virginia,—an accidental glance, of course, but somehow it sent a thrill through her. And yet, she had never seen the man before,—why should his chance look affect her like this? She said nothing to Gordon about the feeling.

The Trevilian party ate their fried chicken, grated ham, and beaten biscuits (to say nothing of other tooth-

some dainties) from a table-cloth on the grass, with Uncle Reuben standing behind his Miss Virginia and pouring iced cherry-bounce as it was needed. Colonel Trevilian was too busy talking politics to waste the hour on a set of giddy young people, so they had things all their own way.

There was a lull in the arbor during the dinner-hour, but Uncle Putney's voice was soon heard again:

"*First* four forward! *La*dies, change!"

His foot was keeping time with his bow, and through their conversation was a running fire of calls, ending generally with an upward tilt of the voice that nobody but a negro fiddler or a camp-meeting musician of the olden time can give, and that none can understand save those who have heard it. Occasionally he would break into a tune when the plot thickened and the sawdust began to fly. Then, with arms and feet and head all a-quiver in an ecstasy of time, his voice would catch the infection and ring out in rhythmic exultation:

"*Swing* yo' pardners all aroun',
An' *all* prom-e-na-*adé!*"

They were in full fling when the Keswick party reached the arbor. The seats were creaking and sagging portentously with their burden of matrons, augmented now from the ranks of the elderly, who could not withstand the witchery of Uncle Putney's bow and the sound of shuffling feet, though they compromised with their consciences by keeping only one eye on the dance and decrying it openly as a device of the devil.

"I was at the babtizin' when Matt Dolaway j'ined the church, and jes' look at her now, kitin' round thar like she wa'n't a professor!"

Just then there was a tangle in the set, resulting from

Matt Dolaway's inexperience. It stirred the sluggish flow of the caviler's Terpsichorean blood.

"Look at that!" she exclaimed in vexation. "They ain't gettin' that figger right! Ef I was n't so heavy—and a church member—I 'd show 'em! I 've danced that figger many a time till four o'clock in the mornin'. It was my favor*ite* one. But I seen the folly of it," she added, recalled from her reminiscences by a smile on the face of her auditor, and feeling that she had made an awkward admission. "I seen the folly of it!"

"You had the fun of it first, though," said the woman, who was patting her foot and longing to be on the floor. She was hampered by no scruples. It was the two small boys hanging to her skirts, and the absence of partners. "They all see the folly of it when they are your—age." She was going to say "size," but refrained in a spasm of generosity.

The girls and young men from Keswick were standing outside the arbor, looking over the heads of the seated spectators.

In the set facing them was a girl, tall and straight, with a certain kind of ferocious beauty in her black eyes and scornful mouth, and a willowy grace of motion. She was watching the party with eyes that never once turned toward them.

"Why, Gordon,"—Virginia leaned across Lide, who stood between them,—"is n't that Rene Taggart?"

"Yes."

"Oh, *do* you remember that day?"

"Yes," he said quietly. "Don't look at her, and don't laugh. She 's watching us."

Just then the girl lifted her head with a defiant gesture. She fancied they were talking about her. Virginia had turned to her cousin, and as he met the girl's eye Gordon raised his hat and bowed.

The blood surged to her face. She nodded and went on with the dance. Nobody knew that her heart was thumping so she could hardly hear the calls, least of all Hank Menafee, her partner, who at this moment caught her around the waist and gave her the triple swing for which he was famed, and which nobody enjoyed more than Rene, generally.

To-day, she released herself angrily.

"You need n't keep it up till I 'm drunk!" she said.

"What 's the matter with you?" he asked, eying her keenly.

Rene could hardly have told, herself.

While this by-play was going on, Gordon's attention was wandering to the crowd surrounding the arbor. He was looking for familiar faces and bowing to this one and that. Suddenly his eyes fell upon the face of the young man that Virginia had called his attention to at the barbecue fire. For a minute they rested there. Who was he? Gordon wondered. He seemed in the crowd and yet not of it, for he was evidently but a looker-on, taking no part in the festivities and speaking, so far as Gordon could see, to no one. His interest seemed less in the dance than in the people circling around the edge of the arbor and constantly changing.

As Gordon stood looking at him, a subtile change came over the man's face. A gleam of something—was it recognition, or hate, or satisfaction, or a mingling of all three?—leaped into his eyes, bent now like a basilisk's upon some person or object on the other side of the big arbor. Gordon had once seen a snake charm a bird to its destruction. This man's narrowed eyes and a certain swaying motion as he moved past intervening heads made him think of it.

He looked in the direction of that gaze. He could see nothing to carry out the similitude that had suggested

itself to him. No helpless, innocent bird was striving to free itself from that fateful spell. His eyes fell only on old Mr. Collins and his daughter, and Jim Baird, Emmons Baird's brother, a country lout who was watching the dancers with open mouth and good-humored smile.

Gordon looked back to the charmer. He would have to take his bearings again if he was to find out what caused that basilisk gaze. But the man was lost in the crowd, and when Gordon turned back to where Jim Baird had stood, he, too, was gone.

"Where is Beverly?" suddenly exclaimed Sallie. "I've lost my beau!" She had not discovered it till now, so absorbed was she in the scene before her, though he had been gone a half-hour or more.

"I saw him walking across the grounds with a young lady," remarked Mr. Caruthers; "a beauty with blonde hair. Who is she, Miss Sallie, do you suppose?"

"It sounds like Lois Chandler," returned Sallie. "She is a beauty, has blonde hair, and Beverly—"

"Nonsense, Sallie, how you talk!" interrupted Virginia, sharply. "Come on, Tom; let's look him up. Come, Sallie."

Two women turned to look after them. They supposed the whole party was gone.

"That's Colonel Trevilian's girl," said one,—"that one in the buff chambray. Ain't she a high-stepper? That's her cousin from Virginia with her. They say she's going to marry him. These Virginians are great on marrying cousins."

Lide looked up at Gordon as the others moved off. He was smiling down at her inscrutably.

"Do you believe it?" she asked.

He evaded it by a counter-question. "Do you?"

"No, I don't! I hope not, anyway."

"Why?"

"Oh, because—"

"Because what?"

She looked up at him with a glance which was half searching, half coquettish. "I think she could do better nearer home."

"I don't know where there would be any one nearer to her." He purposely misunderstood. "He is her own cousin."

"Well," she fluttered with a little sigh, "I hope she won't marry him." She said it mainly because she hoped she would. Lide was secretly a little in love with Gordon herself.

The girls were getting their things together for the return when a pistol-shot came from the direction of the grove back of the grounds.

"What 's that?" asked Lide.

"Somebody shooting at a target, probably," Beverly replied. "You 'll hear it again in a minute."

But they did not.

The girls went on folding shawls, etc., and chatting about the day's pleasures, and explaining some of the local points to Tom. But Beverly and Gordon were becoming dimly conscious of some excitement in the air. They were starting carelessly toward the grove when Colonel Trevilian rode up.

"Is Reuben ready?" he said in a low tone to Beverly. "You 'd better start at once. There 's been trouble over yonder in the grove. Don't let the girls know anything about it,—but—a man was shot just now."

"Shot!" cried Beverly. "That was the pistol-shot we heard, then. Who was it?"

And Gordon asked in the same breath: "Was it accidental?"

"It was Jim Baird. No—I don't believe it was accidental." Colonel Trevilian wiped his forehead with a

shaking hand. He seemed strangely moved. *"He fell dead with a bullet-hole in the middle of the forehead.* God knows where this thing is going to end! Get off as soon as you can!"

They did not tell the girls anything about it, and that ride home was as gay as if death were not stalking amongst them. Colonel Trevilian had stayed behind to see what could be done about Jim Baird,—who, after all, was his neighbor,—and there was nobody but Uncle Reuben to hold them in check. They drove home by the light of the moon. which flooded the prairie roads long before they reached Keswick. The quartette in the carriage sang till their throats ached.—"Rosalie, the Prairie Flower" and "My Old Cabin Home" and "The Pirate's Serenade."—and nobody sang with truer notes than Gordon, though the singing was a trifle mechanical, and there was an undercurrent of wonder about the man that stood watching Jim Baird that day. Was he the one that fired that shot? And why should he have selected Jim Baird, as inoffensive a man as there was on the prairie? If it had been Emmons, now,—that might have seemed reasonable, for everybody said that Emmons Baird had a bad face. It was well for Gordon that they sang instead of talked. for it left him freer to think.—and his thoughts were not all of Jim Baird and his tragic death

Virginia had tried to shift the load when they started from Lone Jack.

"Tom." she said sweetly.—she had reasons of her own for wishing to avoid that drive with her cousin (he had had a letter from his father, the day before. requiring his immediate return, and she knew it).—"suppose you take Sallie in the buggy and I will go in the carriage. I don't like to leave Lide all day long"

"I should be most happy," said Mr. Caruthers, with a

courtly bow to Miss Devereau. He was smothering an oath, but he was a gentleman.

"You look it!" said Sallie, satirically. Then, turning her back upon him and shaking her fist surreptitiously at Virginia, she replied:

"I could n't think of it, Virgie dear. I am to be prima donna of the quartet going home, and, you know, you and Lide both sing alto. This is one time that you could n't fill my place. *You wretch!*" she finished under her breath as she passed her.

So Virginia Trevilian had to take that ride in the moonlight with Tom Caruthers, though on his face was the look that every woman shrinks from and wards off instinctively, sometimes even when at heart she is glad.

What he said nobody will ever know,—for nobody heard but Virginia and the moon; and Virginia was true, and the gentle goddess had been confidante to too many lovers in all these ages to begin to betray them now. She only looked down upon them and smiled, and went under a cloud for a moment while Virginia answered, and came out again with a burst of light as if to show the poor fellow that it was a bright world—a glorious world—in spite of girls.

But he did n't see it. They always think that is the end!

CHAPTER XVIII

A MEMORABLE CAMPAIGN

THE shooting of Jim Baird made a great stir in the neighborhood. Dr. Lay's almost forgotten story of the case he had seen at Lawrence was suddenly remembered, and was repeated with great shaking of heads and numerous blood-curdling additions. Before the barbecue crowd had dispersed, the story had gained currency, and people rode home in excited groups, telling it over and prophesying that the scene of the strange assassin's operations would be shifted now from Kansas to Missouri.

The body was taken home that night to the old Baskin place, Dr. Lay going on ahead to break the news to the brother, who was not at the barbecue. It is impossible to describe the condition into which that news threw Emmons Baird. Dr. Lay said at Keswick, where he stopped on his way home, that he should always think more of the man because of his affection for his brother.

"Do you think it was affection for his brother or fear for himself?" asked Colonel Trevilian, thinking of the look he had once seen on Emmons Baird's face.

"Well, I had n't thought of that," the doctor said.

He thought of it the next day.

It had been arranged between himself and Emmons Baird that the funeral should take place the following afternoon, Dr. Lay offering to secure the services of Mr. Leighton, that the dead man might have Christian burial.

But when the neighbors got there the next day—and many there were that came, the number being constantly augmented by new arrivals—they were met with startling information. The old house was shut up, and there was a new-made grave out in the orchard. Uncle Bob, the old negro that Emmons Baird had bought when he first came to the neighborhood, told the story to the astounded group.

"Yaas, sir; him an' me done buried him las' night. You had n't much more 'n got out er sight, doctor, 'fo' he set me to diggin' de grave."

"Where is Emmons Baird now?" demanded the doctor.

"De Lord knows, sir! *I* don't. When Cindy went to de house dis mawnin' he was gone. . . . No, sir; I don't know nothin' 't all 'bout it. His bed wa'n't tumbled or nothin'. He didn' even take his clo'es. He jes' tuk his gun, and dat black mare er hisn an' lit out."

The story was repeated to fresh instalments as they came up, and never was there a more surprised funeral assemblage, nor one that felt more defrauded. The old story of the Kansas assassin was hashed up again as they rode off in groups, talking excitedly. Some there were who believed that Jim Baird had come to life and been spirited off in the night, but Dr. Lay shook his head. The man was certainly dead. There was no doubt about it whatever. And so they went away.

Uncle Bob's story was true. The murdered man was in his grave, and Emmons Baird had disappeared as completely as though the earth had opened and swallowed him up. It was a great pity but it had.

The whole thing created a nine days' wonder,—twice that for the women,—but excitement was rising to such a height now over the coming elections that it was soon overshadowed for the men. The time seemed likely to

be at hand when the death of one man would be a small matter.

In Missouri, the quadrangular fight of 1860 was virtually a three-cornered one. And yet the specter of the tall man at the fourth corner inspired gravest forebodings.

"If Lincoln is elected it will split this nation in two!" Colonel Trevilian had said to Dr. Lay.

It was heard on all sides during that feverish, hard-fought campaign; it was spoken with every shade of feeling—angrily, boastingly, defiantly; with resolute hearts that heard the trumpet-call in the distance, and were ready; and sorrowfully, pleadingly, by prescient souls that saw behind it all a tide of blood and shrank back.

"If Lincoln is elected it will split this nation in two!"

They did not underestimate the keenness of the wedge; they did not overestimate the blows that would be rained upon it; but they had not calculated the strength of resistance—a factor as potential in war as in physics.

It was a summer and fall of restless anxiety to all. It did not seem possible, from the Jackson County point of view, that Lincoln could be elected. But if he should—what then?

The most baseless, exaggerated fears were real in those days. Men knew not what was before them, and feared the worst,—everything, in fact, except the thing which came—a deluge of blood for four long years. Nobody expected that. The first enlistments were for three months—ample time, it was supposed, for putting down the rebellion. They knew as little of the fiber of the men they were to subdue as the British knew of the Boers.

The ignorance on the other side was as marked and perhaps more amusing.

"Any Southern man can whip a dozen Yankees!" It was the common belief. They felt, no less than the

North, that they were fighting "for God and home and native land." How could the mercenary Dutch, the "Yankee mudsills," stand against the chivalry of the South?

They would "die in the last ditch"! they said. Vainglorious boast uttered by men that knew not war! It was made a scoffing and a byword for four long years. Its echo after the stillness of a forty years' peace has in it something of humor; but to an ear attuned to the plaintive minor chord as well as the triumphant major, there is more of pathos. The world bears witness now that when the end came there were not many ditches left —nor men to die in them. And the fair Southland was filled with widows and widowed maids!

Men were scanning the sky everywhere in 1860, and nowhere more anxiously than in Missouri. The storm was gathering, the heavens were dark, prudent men had their ears to the ground, and the timid sought cover.

It hardly seemed for a while that the boys could go back to college—things were so unsettled and money so scarce. Virginia and Sallie had been obliged to give up all thought of Richmond and Lexington.

How that battle raged in the early fall! How men argued and ranted! How the forces gathered themselves for the final onslaught! Would it be Breckenridge? or Bell and Everett? or would it be Douglas, after all?

November came.

It was Lincoln!

"My dear," said Colonel Trevilian one day, looking up from the paper he had been holding before him for an hour with his eyes glued to one spot, "what would you think of my hiring out Liz?"

It was late in December, and the negroes were hired out the first of January.

Mrs. Trevilian laid down her knitting and looked at him in amazement. She could hardly believe she had heard aright.

"Hire Liz out? What for?"

There had never been a negro hired out from her family since she could remember.

Colonel Trevilian shifted his position uneasily.

"Times are very hard, my dear. I have never known money so tight, not even in the hard times of '57. And the worst of it is, that there is no telling where it is going to end. People don't know what is before them, and they won't let their money go. Then, you know, the last two years we have had no crops on account of the drought. All together—"

"Well?"

"Well,—I 've had an opportunity to-day to hire Liz out, and I don't know but I 'd better do it."

"Who wants her?"

Colonel Trevilian stooped to pick up his paper. He answered without looking up.

"John Renfrew."

"*John Renfrew!*"

"Yes." Colonel Trevilian felt her tone to be uncompromising.

"Do you think she ought to go?" The question was incisive.

"I hardly know. You see, my dear, it is like this: Beverly's expenses make a constant drain upon me for ready money, and, as I said, money is exceedingly hard to get hold of. Mr. Renfrew offers a good price for her and will pay cash. If you could get along without her—"

"Oh, I could get along without her. That is n't it!"

"It is not just the place I should like for her myself,"

Colonel Trevilian admitted. "But—well, the truth of the matter is that if I don't do it, Beverly will have to come home. I should be very sorry for him to do that—in his last year."

"Why don't you hire out one of the men?"

"I can't do it. Everything is in such an unsettled state that nobody wants help that he can do without.

Mrs. Trevilian knit three full rounds before she spoke. When she was at the middle of the needle, she folded the sock together and looked at her husband.

"Mr. Trevilian, Liz belongs to me. She is not going to Mr. John Renfrew's."

She spoke very quietly. In the whole course of her married life, it was the first time that the question of *mine* and *thine* had come up. As in the case of most Missouri women, her property, which was large, had been taken into the common fund and was known thenceforward as his. They had always lived in such abundance that this had never created a ripple between them. They hardly knew that there was any other way to do. Supreme in her own domain, she had never in her life before interfered in his.

"Mr. John Renfrew's is not a safe place for Liz. Her mother served us faithfully. I will not see her child harmed while I live."

"Then Beverly will have to come home."

"Very well. He may come home. He will never be educated at Liz's expense."

The Trevilians were gentlefolk. They never quarreled. The swift fingers had knit twice three rounds before the Colonel spoke.

"I think, perhaps, you are right, my dear, as you usually are."

He sighed inaudibly. He wanted very much for Beverly to graduate from the University of Virginia.

That night, when they were in their own room, his wife said:

"I don't know but it is better, anyway." There was no need of her saying, or his asking, what. "If old Virginia should go, he'd be sure to go with her if he was there."

"Old Virginia will go!" he answered. "You can depend on that!"

CHAPTER XIX

A WORKING, BUZZING, STINGING HIVE

SPRING had come. Down in the woods the anemones were holding up tinted cups on slender, wiry stems that swayed with every passing breeze. The violets and bloodroot and adder's-tongue and all the rest were waiting only to have the dead leaves pushed away to prove to the world that they were doing their part, if nobody *was* looking on.

Virginia, with a restlessness which she never even asked herself to explain, tramped over the creek banks for dogwood and redbuds. They were not altogether pleasant excursions to Virginia. The dogwood and redbuds were so high. They made her think all the time about Gordon and Beverly when she tried to reach them. And she was troubled about Beverly. He was at home now. He could n't stay out the year. But—he seemed preoccupied, and not like the Beverly of old. Then he was always finding some reason for going down to Mr. Whalen's—at least he went down that way.

It was no wonder that he was restless. Everybody was, for that matter. And anything was better than for him to go in the other direction, Mrs. Trevilian thought, with a shudder; for at Independence they were recruiting and drilling and doing all sorts of warlike things. Virginia hoped secretly he would join the "Grays." It would be glorious to go to war! It was not that that troubled her about Beverly.

She and Sallie made rebel flags out of scraps of silk.

Sallie had been strictly loyal until Beverly's return. Then the principles imbibed from her uncle were swept away in an evening. It took just that long for Beverly Trevilian to convert her. Beverly was so handsome! He would look elegant in gray, she confided to Virginia.

It was not plain sailing with the flags. They had great difficulty with their stars, which looked more like starfish than celestial luminaries fit to adorn the new nation's banner. They began to hope that no more States would secede. They took one, very straight and plumb as to its "crimson bars," but shaky as to the field, to show to Mammy. Nothing was ever quite finished with Virginia till Mammy had inspected it. They had fastened it to a lead-pencil for a staff.

"An' dat 's ole Figinny's flag!" said Mammy, holding it up and looking at it critically. "Ole Albemarle, Miss Figinia? Humph! Dat little thing got de 'shorance to wave! Ain't you chil'n gwineter make me a Albemarle flag?"

"You can have this one," said Virginia, eying the stars with manifest disapproval. "I think I can improve on this."

And so Mammy became the possessor of a rebel flag. Little did they dream where it would rest at last.

Virginia made one and sent it to Gordon. Pinned to it was the legend:

"This is the flag that the friends of Virginia fight for." Whether the State or the girl she did not specify.

While Sallie and Virginia were busy with their banner-making, Mrs. Trevilian and Miss Nannie were preparing for war of another kind, less glorious, perhaps, than that which filled their minds, but fraught with dangers stern enough if the truth were known, for a brigade of women was to be brought together for a whole day in the spring of '61.

They were going to clean the church,—a useless labor, if they had only known it, for within a twelvemonth it would be in ashes.

"Now, Nan," said Mrs. Trevilian as she took a last look at the array of buckets, mops, and brooms that Uncle Reuben had mustered for the fray, "let me give you one last warning. Don't—say—anything!"

"Sister Bettie, I 'm not going to say a thing unless old Mrs. McTavish gets after me. But that old woman irritates me beyond measure! She always rubs my fur the wrong way! If you see her coming, I want you to head her off, for I feel it in my bones that if she tackles me I 'll say something! What business has she being Union? I don't mind it in old man Chandler and Lois and people like that. It 's natural for them, I suppose. But old Mrs. McTavish is a Virginian!"

"Oh, well," said Mrs. Trevilian, soothingly, "she 's from western Virginia, you know." Apparently, western Virginia did not count.

"I do hope Miss Tiny and Miss Tony won't go," mused Miss Nannie. "They are worse than I am."

"Oh, yes!" assented Mrs. Trevilian; "they have n't *any* sense!"

"I never heard anybody carry on as they do," said Miss Nannie. "Miss Tiny told me yesterday, when I was there, that their brother Jeems was all they had, but they would willingly see him offered up on old Virginia's altar."

"Have they heard what he is going to do?"

"No. But Miss Tiny nearly took my head off when I asked her the same thing. 'Do?' she said in her most dignified manner,—the one, you know, that makes you feel that you could crawl through the eye of a needle and would like to!—'My dear! he is a Virginian. That is sufficient!' But Miss Tony told me that they sent every day to the office for the letter. I believe it would kill them

if he did n't go with the South. But, of course, he will."

"I am not so sure of that," said Colonel Trevilian, looking up from the "St. Louis Republican." "It will depend entirely on how it strikes him. I went to school with Jeems Bascom. He is as hard-headed as they are."

As they were on their way to the church, Mrs. Whalen's rockaway drove up beside them.

"I 'm hurrying on," she said; "but I must stop to tell you something, Mrs. Trevilian. Did you know you had offended Mrs. Tigerman very much by not giving her a special invitation to come to-day?"

"Well, why should I? It 's not my party. And she was in church when the notice was given out. I saw her."

"Yes, she was. But she heard of your sending word to Mrs. Pasco and myself and one or two others, who were not there, and she feels dreadfully aggrieved that she did not have a special invitation. Her feelings are so hurt she says she would n't think of coming now."

"It 's a good thing," remarked Miss Nannie, while Mrs. Trevilian looked quite disturbed. "Anybody that has such fragile feelings as that, had better put them on the top shelf out of the way and stay at home to watch them! Around with a dozen other women is no place for them, certainly. Did you ever see such people, Mrs. Whalen?"

"Never. They stand with a chip on their shoulder all the time—both of them—he is as bad as she is."

"And people that are looking out for slights, always find them," said Mrs. Trevilian. "I 've noticed that."

And Mrs. Whalen, assenting heartily, drove on.

It was on a Saturday, the eleventh of May, that the bucket-brigade met at Hickory Grove church,—a peaceful army enough, for they all went to work as if they were dumb. Every woman was on her guard; for every

one knew that she held within her breast a powder-magazine that would explode the moment the spark was struck.

That church was soon in the midst of an upheaval. Each woman had brought a negro woman with her, and several had brought men. By noon the strips of carpeting from the pews made the grove look like a bannered hall, the spittoons were out sunning, and the floor was drinking in soap-suds. Nobody had talked. Everybody had worked. And peace reigned.

They had their dinner in the grove. Miss Nannie waited till Mrs. McTavish was seated and then sat down on the other side.

"Mrs. Trevilian, I see Beverly is back," said Mrs. Whalen. "Is n't that unexpected?"

"No'm,—not exactly. We thought it best for him to come. Things are so unsettled—"

"My! I should say so!" broke in Mrs. McTavish, as she reached for a pickle. "I was tellin' *him* yesterday that I was glad all ourn was girls. It seems like, ef this war goes on,—and, dear knows, it looks like it was goin' to,—that everybody will be uneasy that 's got boys."

"Yes," said Mrs. Trevilian, gently; "yes." She had been bearing that load for weary months. "Mrs. Lay, are your peas ready to stick yet?"

"I don't see how anybody can gabble about peas and such like when the country is in the condition it 's in!" Mrs. McTavish said in an indignant aside to Mrs. Devereau. She had opened the subject purposely.

"I reckon it 's better for us to keep the conversation on peas than war," returned that lady. "It does n't do for women to talk, Mrs. McTavish."

"Well, there 's one thing I 'm going to ask Miss Nannie Trevilian before I get away from here! I heard she said—"

"Oh, I would n't try to ferret out reports, Mrs. McTavish. You can hear anything these days."

They were talking in pairs around the table-cloth, when one of those horrible unexpected pauses that sometimes fall upon a company as if by concerted action, descended to Mrs. Whalen's confusion.

"You know they 've taken the St. Louis Arsenal," she was saying in a low tone. It sounded preternaturally distinct.

Mrs. Lay threw herself hastily into the breach.

"Mrs. Dyson, how is your meat keeping this year?" She had forgotten, in her haste, that this was a winter subject of conversation.

And so they dodged the thing that absorbed them all; for even as they talked of household matters, and flowers, and green things growing, they were thinking of war and their boys.

"Miss Nannie," began Mrs. McTavish, as the pie was started around, "I 've been layin' off to ask you about something I heard you said."

Miss Nannie rose.

"I have n't time to talk about anything now, Mrs. McTavish. I 'm going at that pulpit right away. Sister Bettie, save me some of that ribbon-cake to eat on the way home."

But when they got back to the church they found their political affinities and their tongues. Scattering out in twos and threes, a soft babel arose. They had stood it as long as they could.

If the recording angel had flitted from one group to another, he would have heard fragments that told the story of where their interest was.

"You know the governor has called for troops," said Mrs. Swamscott, taking a fresh piece of paper for the window she was polishing. She spoke guardedly, and

her companion lowered her tone in reply, for Mrs. Whalen was passing just then.

"Mrs. Whalen," called Mrs. Swamscott from her elevation, "I was just saying to Miss Marthy that it did seem like the men might refrain from tobacco in the house of the Lord."

"Well, now, it does so!" returned Mrs. Whalen, as her woman deposited the spittoon in the pew whence it had been removed. Then they discussed the frailties of the other sex with great unction, for that was perfectly safe neutral ground on which there was no danger of disagreement.

"I thought I would n't let her think we were talking about her," remarked Mrs. Swamscott, later, to Miss Marthy. "Mrs. Whalen is a mighty clever woman, if they *are* Union."

"And so is he," agreed Miss Marthy, not noticing the sex complications in which she was involving the gentleman in question.

On her knees, where she had dropped to straighten the strip of carpet that Mrs. Pasco was tacking, Mrs. Trevilian was saying: "No'm, I 'm afraid we can't keep him. It is the 'Independence Grays' he wants to go with." She had said it a good many times before, on bended knees, with no ear to listen but the Infinite.

"I know just how you feel," sighed Mrs. Pasco. "John went yesterday."

Up in the pulpit, where they were dusting and placing the hair-cloth sofa and the chairs that flanked it on either side, Miss Nannie's energetic whisper was heard:

"Of *course* they have a right to secede! Why, brother William says—"

The angel caught the rest.

They were nearly through when Mr. Swamscott appeared in the doorway. He had been over to Cass County

and stopped in on his way home. He had a paper in his hand and was laboring under great excitement.

"Have you-all heard the news?"

"No. What is it?" asked Miss Nannie, speaking for the company.

"They 've taken Camp Jackson."

"*What!* Camp Jackson? Who has?"

"Captain Lyon. The boys are all prisoners of war now."

His news was like fire to tow. Some of those prisoners were from Jackson County. From all quarters of the State young men had gone to that encampment to learn something of the art of war under General Frost. And they were captured, actually made prisoners of war, by a Yankee captain!

"There 's more to it than that," said Mr. Swamscott. "As they were going back to the city with the prisoners, they halted them near Olive Street and kept them waiting for several hours. Of course a big crowd gathered,—men, women, and children,—and it seems that the crowd was jeering at the troops and calling them 'blackguards' in derision. You know, one of the German companies calls itself 'die Schwartze Garde,' and it was n't very hard to make 'Dutch blackguards' out of that.

"Well, nobody seems to know just how it happened, but the Dutch began firing on the people."

"The helpless, unarmed people? Was anybody hurt?"

"Hurt! I tell you, they just mowed them down. One that they killed was a baby in arms."

The women broke into horrified ejaculations.

"Oh, the wretches!" cried Miss Nannie. "But what can you expect when a foreign foe is permitted to invade the State. I wonder what Frank Blair thinks *now* of his Home Guards!"

"This is awful!" breathed Mrs. Lay. "Do you

think it is possible it has been exaggerated, Mr. Swamscott?"

"I 'm afraid not, Mrs. Lay. It comes pretty straight. The 'Republican' says the wounded and dying made that field look like a battle-ground."

"How did the people take it?" asked Miss Nannie. "Were n't they wild? The black Dutch!"

Mr. Swamscott read on:

"It is impossible to describe the intense exhibition of feeling manifested last evening. The streets were thronged—imprecations loud and long were hurled into the darkening air—the drinking-saloons and other resorts were closed simultaneously at dark—and the windows of dwellings were fastened for fear of a general riot. The offices of the 'Missouri Democrat' and the 'Anzeiger des Westens' were placed under guard for protection."

"That old Dutch paper ought to be razed to the ground!" exclaimed Miss Nannie, with flashing eyes. "Missouri has warmed a viper in her breast that is ready now to sting her!"

There was no reply to this. Nobody was ready just then to defend the "Dutch," as the Germans were universally called. Undoubtedly, this act at the inception of the war had much to do with the very cordial detestation in which they were afterward held.

"Oh! *oh!*" cried Miss Nannie. "*Why* did n't they pass that bill to arm the State!"

"They 've passed it now, Miss Nannie. They were considering it yesterday when the news came of the capture. The Union men were fighting it just as hard as they could when the governor came in and told them that the camp was captured and the State troops held as prisoners of war. That was enough! Their opposition was gone! In fifteen minutes that bill had passed both houses and was ready for the governor's signature."

"Is n't that glorious!" cried Miss Nannie, her good resolutions cast to the winds. "We 'll get Missouri yet, Mr. Swamscott!"

"Nan!" But Miss Nannie was past holding in now.

"And that is n't all," continued Mr. Swamscott. "This happened yesterday, you know. The paper says that at midnight all Jefferson City was roused by the ringing of the church bells. The legislature came hurriedly together, and the governor notified them that he had just been informed of the approach of two of Blair's regiments to capture the capital. Well, sir, they just went wild! An act was rushed through both houses authorizing the governor to take such measures as he might deem necessary to repel invasion or put down rebellion. And,"—he added in triumph,—"if you 'll believe me, they appropriated thirty thousand dollars to be used for that purpose!"

"Oh-h!" breathed Miss Nannie, "if they had only done it before!"

Mr. Swamscott folded his paper and put it in his pocket. "Mrs. Trevilian, you 'd better be seeing after Beverly. I know I 've got to chain Isaac!"

It was a good thing that Hickory Grove church was nearing completion, for interest in the Lord's house had suddenly abated. They were all eager to get home and tell the news.

Uncle Reuben was loading up and Miss Nannie getting her things together, when Mrs. McTavish approached. She was going to have that out if the State had gone to smash!

"Miss Nannie," she began.

The beleaguered lady turned upon her.

"Well? What is it?"

The tone was uncompromising. Miss Nannie was ready for anything now.

The ladies all continued their preparations for departure, but with one ear turned toward the combatants.

"I heard you said something about me."

"You did! What did you hear?"

"I heard you said there wa'n't nobody from Virginia but the poor tackies in the mountains that was Union!"

A smile rippled over the faces looking into their baskets. "I don't doubt she said it," whispered Mrs. Swamscott to Mrs. Devereau.

"Did you hear it from good authority?"

"Yes 'm, I did!"

"Well," said Miss Nannie, composedly, "I don't know whether I said it or not. It sounds very much like me. But I 'il just tell you now, Mrs. McTavish, that I don't hold myself responsible one day for what I said the day before!"

And with this the irate lady of Caledonian name and Hibernian proclivities was forced to be content.

CHAPTER XX

"TRAMP, TRAMP, TRAMP!"

"And there was tumult in the air,
The fife's shrill note, the drums loud beat,
And through the wide land everywhere
The answering tread of hurrying feet."

THE capture of Camp Jackson with the subsequent firing upon the crowd of spectators was a bomb that set Missouri ablaze. The State had been invaded! Blood had been shed! Surely the fullness of time had come now!

The river counties sprang to arms. Within a week they were hurrying to the capital—from Cooper and Cole and the "Kingdom of Callaway."

The "Independence Grays" went down with full ranks—Beverly in the forefront and Ike Swamscott beside him. They carried the cannon captured from the arsenal at Liberty. A cannon was a thing to be proud of. Not every soldier who took up arms in Missouri took up more than the Lord had given him.

But they did their best. Hunting-rifles were taken down from the antlers, and shot-guns and powder-horns called into requisition, as the flint-lock muskets of their Revolutionary forefathers had been. It was anything that could shoot! It seemed lucky for once that the Missourians were a bellicose people. Revolvers were commoner with them than with their brethren in the North.

Beverly had gone forth buoyantly. It would not be

long, he said. And Virginia, believing him, had buckled on his sword with hands that did not tremble and eyes that shone.

The two stood together at the horse-blocks just before he went away. He had been down the road toward Mr. Whalen's—to say good-by, he said.

"Virge," he said suddenly, stooping to examine his saddle-girth, "why don't you and Sallie and the rest of the girls ever go to see Lois Chandler?"

"Lois Chandler!" repeated Virginia, wonderingly. She was thinking of war, not girls. "Why should we?"

"She is the prettiest girl in the neighborhood,—and she 's a nice girl, too,—if her father *did* vote for Abe Lincoln."

"She *is* awfully pretty," assented Virginia, who was not without ability to see beauty in another girl,—"and she 's nice enough, too, I suppose. She always seemed so at school. But, brother,—you know. She 's just not our kind. She says 'had n't ought' and 'how?' and all that."

"Virge,"—Beverly's tone was very serious now,—"if the time ever comes when you can do a kindness to Lois Chandler, I want you to do it. She must be awfully lonely—did you ever think how cut off she is from everybody? And, besides,"—the girth needed tightening now,—"a friend of yours thinks a good deal of her."

"A friend of mine!" Virginia's cheeks glowed with a sudden inflow of blood. "Well, I 'm sure he 's welcome to! Who is this friend of mine?"

He looked at her curiously a moment, and then threw back his head with his old-time hilarious laugh. He was going to speak, but just then his father joined them and the opportunity was past.

Virginia pondered over his words not a little when he was gone. Why should she go to see Lois Chandler?

Suppose Gordon did think a good deal of her,—of course it was Gordon,—that was nothing to her! He had always liked her when they were in school together—but so had Beverly and the rest of the boys. She was just the kind of a girl that boys always took to—pretty and clinging, and not much sense! Perhaps it was her dependence that appealed to all the masculine hearts, she said to herself, scornfully.

Perhaps it was n't Gordon, after all, that he meant. Then there came to her the recollection of what Gordon had said to her the day she tried to find out if it was Lois he had been walking with: "If I or Beverly or any of the boys wanted to tell Lois Chandler good-by, why should n't we?" . . . Yes, it was Gordon!

It was very lonely when Beverly was gone. So many of the boys were with him—Ike Swamscott and Lee McMurtrie and John Pasco and the two Caldwell boys and —oh, ever so many! And it was not the young men alone. Ben Tolles had stood it till old Virginia went; then he said he could n't "go ag'in' his native State." And there were many just like him.

There was a clattering back and forth in Jackson County. The recruiting officers scoured the country, and not in vain.

The other side was not idle. From Kansas City Van Horn had gone to St. Louis and obtained permission to organize a battalion. Recruiting had begun in earnest.

The blight of war had fallen upon the ragged little town at the mouth of the Kaw. Business, except that growing out of military operations, was practically suspended. Gordon had intended settling there when he got his degree, but anybody with half an eye could see now that Kansas City, with its neighbors on the west was a place to leave if one could get away. A few months before it

had been a thriving village of 2500. By May it had shrunk to half that size.

On Grand Prairie they were bracing themselves for a shock. Mr. Caldwell had taken his negroes and his mules and gone to Texas. Jackson County was too close to the border for safety, he said. Tigerman, having little else in the way of personal property, had packed up his wife and children and gone—nobody knew where. Perhaps he, also, noticed that Jackson was pretty close to the border.

"Judge Saunders has taken his negroes down to Arrow Rock," said Colonel Trevilian to his wife one day. He had just come from Independence.

"He has? Do you think there is any danger?" she asked anxiously.

"Not with ours," he said confidently. "I have no fears whatever of our negroes leaving us. Why should they? They have always been treated well, and they have sense enough to know it."

"I don't know, father," Virginia said, looking up from the gown-yoke she was embroidering. "Liz says Jake told her they would all have a farm if they went to Kansas, and would n't have to work any more. It has evidently been talked over."

"My dear," returned her father, with some irritation, "you ought not to encourage Liz to talk about such things. It is preposterous!"

"I don't encourage her, father! I told her it was ridiculous. I don't know where Jake got it from."

"Old man Chandler, probably," remarked Miss Nannie, with acerbity.

Gordon came home in June—but not to locate in Kansas City. He had held himself until his diploma was earned, but his heart was keeping step to the drum-beat

of the nation. Paul's message had come to him: "I speak unto you young men because you are strong." What better use for his strength than to defend his nation's flag?

"I knew you would go," his mother sighed. "I have been nerving myself to meet it. Oh, yes, I know it is right, dear child; but—I 'm afraid I am not made of such stuff as the Spartan mothers."

But Dr. Lay grasped his hand as man to man, and Gordon felt his heart thrill with a new determination and strength.

"Go, my son, go! Our country needs her bravest now!"

Gordon went over to Keswick the next day. There had not been much communication between the families during the last few weeks, and Sallie was down in Cass on a visit. Beverly was gone—they knew that much—and so did he, for Sallie had written him how handsome he and Ike Swamscott looked in their new uniforms. Most of the troops were ununiformed, but the "Grays" were an exceptional company.

He did not tell them where he was going, nor ask any of them to go with him. So many things had happened since he had seen them last,—so many things were likely to happen now!—and—he felt himself growing hot and cold as he thought of the differences between them. Carefully put away, not for love of it, but for love of the fingers that made it, was the little rebel flag that she had sent him. How often he had thought of the message that came with it: "This is the flag that the friends of Virginia fight for"! What would she think of his enlisting to fight against it?

But he knew perfectly well that, whatever she thought of it, he should do it. He had fought that battle first of all, and come off victor—though a little faint and spent, perhaps.

He gave his bridle and a coin to the grinning negro who came shambling out from the rear.

"Howdy, Marse Gordon! Thanky, suh! How does yo' copporosity seem to sagashiate, suh?"

"All right, Jake. My corporosity is in prime condition. You have n't forgotten how to talk dictionary, I see, since I 've been away. How are you?"

"Mighty po'ly, bless de Lawd, suh." No well-bred negro ever owned up to being anything more than "po'ly," or "tole'ble" at most.

"You don't look it," said Gordon, giving the sleek face and well-fed body a critical glance. "You are possumin'. How 's Ca'line?"

"Ca'line 's jes' tole'ble, suh. She 's got a mis'ry in her chis', Ca'line is. Marse Gordon, look like you favors yo' paw mo' an' mo' all de time. You jes' de ve'y spit of 'im. Yaas, suh, dat you is."

"Are the ladies at home, Jake?"

Gordon's heart was beating so that he was glad of the negro's loquacity. It gave him time to steady himself.

"Yaas, suh. Dey all in de house,—'scusin' of Miss Figinia. She done gone to Independence to make a visit. Jes' walk in, Marse Gordon. Dey done hyeard de pronouncement dat you 'd come, f'om yo'-all's Bentley, wha' 's comin' over hyeah sparkin' dat triflin', no-'count Liz. I reckon dey 's contemplatin' yo' arrival, suh."

They received him exactly as they would have done a year ago. They talked of his journey home, his school, his commencement, Virginia's absence and the disappointment she would feel at not seeing him,—everything but Beverly and the war. People grew very skilful in those days at threading the passages of conversation without running into shoal water.

At last Gordon asked pointedly about Beverly.

"He is in Jefferson City," Mrs. Trevilian said, with a

little tremble of the chin. "We could n't keep him, Gordon."

"Some of us did n't want to keep him!" Miss Nannie said, with flashing eyes. "I gloried in his spirit."

Mrs. Trevilian talked straight on.

Gordon's heart sank. In many ways Virginia was like Miss Nannie. She was intense and sometimes imperious. And yet she was like her sweet mother, too,—who was always reasonable. This was the undercurrent that was running in his mind while Mrs. Trevilian talked.

She told him all about Beverly and the message he had left. Miss Nannie had been called away, and they talked more freely without her.

"He said he knew you would be for the Union, Gordon, but that that should never come between you," and Gordon felt a sudden rush of feeling to heart and eyes.

He rose to go at last, and Mrs. Trevilian went with him out upon the pillared portico. Keswick had never looked more beautiful. A "queen of the prairie" was trained around one column, and a "Baltimore belle," with its full-set clusters and the fragrance one never forgets, was on the other. At the parlor window was a sweet-brier. He and Virginia had found it in the woods one day and planted it there. They were all doing their bravest. It was a time for Nature to help—and Missouri roses are riotous in June.

They stood in silence. Not a word had been said about his plans. He looked out now over the scene before him with a sudden prophetic anguish of spirit. How peaceful it was! how beautiful! What would it be when he saw it again?

On the left was the summer-house. How often he and she had sat there together! Would they ever again?

When he turned to Mrs. Trevilian his eyes were dim. He took her hand and raised it to his lips.

"It has been like home to me," he said, "and—I may not see it again."

Her hand closed over his.

"You are going?" she said rather than asked.

"I am going. I can't expect you to say, 'God speed,' Mrs. Trevilian, but give me your blessing."

She took him in her arms. He was almost like her own son to her.

"God keep you, my child! I pray him that you two may never meet in battle!"

"Heaven grant it! But if we do—I do not need to tell you, Mrs. Trevilian, that this arm will never be raised against him."

"I believe it, Gordon," she said. It comforted him afterward to remember her faith.

And this was the sweet memory of Keswick he took with him.

CHAPTER XXI

"OH, SISTER PHŒBE!"

THEY were having a party at Mr. Delano's in Independence the next night. Thank God, it is never all shadow anywhere or anywhen in this world! They were in full tide of what the scoffing called "Presbyterian dancing."

Mr. Delano was an elder, and, of course, could not be expected to countenance worldly amusements. Dancing he believed to be a device of the Evil One,—in fact, he knew it! His mind never experienced one fleeting doubt on this subject. His principles were ultramarine, and his practice—well, the young people in his house always stood in a ring instead of a parallelogram, the girls sandwiched between the boys, and then joined hands and "circled to the left," to the music of their own young voices, in the pious delusion that it was not a dance but a play!—good Mr. Delano looking on with approval and thanking God that these dear lambs were not as other lambs, nor even as the poor ungodly Episcopalians who fiddled openly and danced on the square.

It was "Oh, Sister Phœbe!" they were playing—the game that stands in all hearts of that day for youthful effervescence and the joy of life. It was another "Missouri Compromise." It has limbered the joints and satisfied the cravings of whole generations of youthful sinners longing to dance and daring not.

Even Mr. McTavish could see no harm in "Oh, Sister Phœbe!" though his more acrid spouse, after watch-

ing it once, said that "for her part, she could n't see much difference between professors and worldlians,—one seemed about as limber-jointed as the other." But the majority took Mr. McTavish's view, and the Presbyterian youngsters got their share, after all, for Nature is rarely cheated.

They were singing it gaily to-night, with a soft swish of skirts and the tread of slippered feet:

"Oh, Sister Phœbe, how merry were we
When we sat under the juniper tree!
The juniper tree-e,—heigh-o! heigh-o!
The juniper tree-e,—heigh-o!"

Thus far it was always clear sailing, and everybody felt and looked natural. But in the next quatrain a choice was imminent, and those having any reasonable hope of being selected by the lone occupant of the ring looked away in rosy self-consciousness or cast coquettish glances, as the case might be. And now it was:

"Rise you up, Johnny, and choose you the one—
Choose you the fairest, or else choose none!
Or else choose none,—heigh-o! heigh-o!
Or else choose none,—heigh-o!"

All this was preliminary, of course; for, with the maiden of his choice seated demurely beside him, Johnny or Tommy or Jimmy, or whoever the happy youth might be, had a cap in his hand with which to crown the captured lady. For his guerdon he was to—but the song itself tells it:

"Take this cap on your head—keep your head warm;
Take a sweet kiss and 't will do you no harm!

'T will do you no harm,—heigh-o! heigh-o!
'T will do you no harm,—heigh-o!"

And probably it never did. None of us can remember the damage, anyway, though we have no difficulty in recalling the bliss.

From time to time couples slipped out of the ring and promenaded up and down the piazza, which seemed built on purpose, running as it did the length of two generous Missouri rooms and the hall. Then there was the summer-house in the yard, whose moonlighted doorway and shadowy nooks stood invitingly near. Of course, a place of any pretensions always had a summer-house.

Virginia Trevilian was radiant that night in a dotted white Swiss, with blue shirred ribbons defining her snowy arms and neck, and a "queen-of-the-prairie" rose in her hair. John Delano had asked her if it were named for her. It might have been, considering her stateliness, the bloom on her cheek, and her prairie home. Somehow, nobody ever thought of Virginia as a country girl. She was simply "from Jackson" or "the prairie."

She was talking animatedly to young Tevis when she heard her name pronounced behind her, in a stage whisper, by Uncle Joe, the negro man who waited on the door. She excused herself and stepped into the hall.

"What is it, Uncle Joe?"

"Dey 's some young man waitin' fur you outside, Miss Figinia. No'm, he say he won't come in. He 's waitin' down dar by de white honeysuckle."

"Who is it? Do you know?"

"No'm. I don't know him. Looks to me lak he 's one o' dese hyeah Federals."

"Oh, no, Uncle Joe," she laughed. "There 's no Federal that wants me! or would get me if he did!"

She ran lightly down the walk to the honeysuckle which

covered a flaring fan-shaped frame out in the yard. A tall man stood in its shadow. She cast a half-scared glance toward the house as she saw the uniform of a soldier.

"Did you wish to see me?" she asked, with head erect. "I am Miss Trevilian." The visor of the man's fatigue-cap threw his face into shadow.

"Virginia!"

"Why, Gordon Lay!" She put her hands impulsively in his, and then drew back. "What are you doing in those clothes?"

His heart sank. He had not seen her since September. Before her welcome, even, was her disapprobation made manifest.

"When did you get home from Kentucky?"

"The day after you went away, your mother said."

"Did you go to see mother?"

"No. I went to see you, but you were gone. Then I came on here. I could n't go without seeing you, Virginia."

She dropped into a seat that stood at the foot of the honeysuckle, and he sat down beside her. They were enveloped by its cloying sweet. The fragrance associated itself forever afterward with that hour.

"Gordon, are you really, really going?" His soldier dress had told the news.

"I am going. I have come to say good-by."

"But, Gordon, *why* do you go? I know you don't feel as we do, but why must you go to fight your own people? For they are your own people!"

"Because I am needed," he said simply.

"Did you know Beverly had gone?"

"Yes."

"Suppose you two should meet on the battle-field. Have you thought of it?"

"I have thought of it many, many times, Virginia. But—he did what he thought was right, and I must do the same. Do you blame me for it?"

"No. It is n't that. But oh, Gordon, it is so dreadful! Will you be where they will fire cannon and bombs and all those things that you can't dodge as you could a little bullet?"

"I shall go wherever they send me," he said; "a soldier cannot choose."

"When did you enlist?"

"Yesterday."

The moonlight made the place like day, except for the shadow of the honeysuckle.

"Did mother see you in those clothes?"

"No. But I don't believe it would have made any difference with her if she had." He was thinking of her parting blessing.

"Gordon! Stand up."

He stood before her in the full strength of his young manhood. His uniform accentuated his height.

She shivered and turned her head with a little gasp.

"You are so tall! They would be sure to aim for you!"

The promenaders went back and forth on the piazza; black coats, and figures in voluminous skirts and rainbow tints, with gleaming bare arms, flitted past the French windows. The soft tramp of that endless circle came to them plainly; there was a burst of gay laughter now and then; and the song went on afresh:

"Oh, Sister Phœbe, how merry were we!"

Virginia drew her breath almost in a sob. It was always in the past.

"How merry were we! how merry *were* we!" It

seemed to her that it would never be "*are* we" again! There was a tightening in her throat and a constriction about her heart. What good times they had had all their lives! But—it was over now!—with Beverly in one army and Gordon in the other. Oh! it was too dreadful! And that wretched, senseless music!

"When we sat under the juniper tree!
The juniper tree-e,—heigh-o! heigh-o!
The juniper—"

She recalled how they used to wonder what the juniper tree was, and why Sister Phœbe had chosen that, and who Sister Phœbe was, anyway.

But if the juniper tree was not in her catalogue of remembered umbrage, almost everything else was—everything, certainly, that grew in Jackson County. And Gordon was with her under them all!

There were the apple trees they used to rifle in the spring, and the haw bushes, and the crab-apple down in the pasture, whose blossoms, Gordon had told her, shyly, one day, were just the color of her cheek: she had always remembered that, for that was the day she first found out —oh, well!—and there were the locust trees in Dr. Lay's yard, under which they had all sat and played "Authors," steeping themselves in perfumed bliss and care-free indolence, while the bees went back and forth, gathering honey for future needs and looking down in buzzing superiority upon the lazy mortals, never guessing that they, too, were gathering sweets for wintry days; and there were the redbuds and dogwood that the boys had scorned to have called trees at all; and the giants of the forest that they climbed for grapes; and the hickories and black walnuts of their youthful hunts, when they did not mind stained hands for the joy that was set before them of

luscious nuts and winter nights and Scott's novels and the big honey-locust under which they found the thorns to use as stilettos for the gown-yokes the girls were always embroidering. Even the sapling spoke of him,—for one of her earliest recollections was of the boys' holding down the slender trees for herself and Sallie to mount and ride. Gordon always showed her exactly where to sit and let her up gently, while Beverly misled the trusting Sallie and went into convulsions of laughter on the ground as she shot shrieking into the air.

Oh, the good times they had had under the trees! And Gordon was in them all!

"How merry were we! how merry were we!"

"Virge!" He dropped into the old name unconsciously. "Suppose I should n't come back. Would you care?"

Care! It seemed to the girl, with the cannon-ball before her eyes, that she would never care for anything else. There was little coquetry about Virginia Trevilian, and this was no time for it, had there been. They were facing tremendous issues, and they knew it.

"Oh, Gordon!" she said, her heart in her eyes.

And he took her to his arms.

It was a poor wooing, but when two hearts have opened side by side from nascent bud to perfect flower, there is small need of words.

"Virginia, if I come back—"

If? She clung to him.

He would come back! He would! He *would!* Surely the cannon-ball would pass him by! It must strike somebody, of course,—but not him! O God, not him!

It is thus we pray, with inarticulate moans. It is thus we believe, in our helplessness and in our love. Some other one, not ours! we say, forgetting, in our anguish,

that he, too,—that other one—is somebody's stay, somebody's best-beloved.

"If I come back?" he whispered.

"*When* you come back!" she said, her form erect, her head thrown back, with shining eyes and lips that tried hard not to quiver. "When you come back!"

She would not say *if*.

And so they were betrothed.

"Virginia," he said, after a while, "I was half afraid to come to you in my uniform. I thought you might scorn me, perhaps, because I had it on. And yet—I wore it purposely."

She looked up at him proudly.

"Why should I scorn you for offering your life for the cause you think right? If, feeling as you do, you had stayed at home rather than risk losing me—*then* I should have scorned you. I can forgive a courageous act, even when it is against my side, but a base one—*never!*"

"Dearest, I think one could hardly do a base thing with love of you in his heart."

Virginia remembered those words long afterward and tried to believe they were true.

"But oh, Gordon!" she cried later. "I do wish you were in the other army! I won't know now which side to pray for!"

"Pray that the right may win," he said gravely.

CHAPTER XXII

BORDER WARFARE BEGINS

ONE September morning, three months after that farewell under the honeysuckle, James H. Lane, with his Kansas troops, crossed the border into Missouri. Two weeks later, that body of cavalry, in their beautiful suits of blue, rode proudly back into Kansas City, the flag at their head—the flag men were dying for elsewhere—and in their rear the spoils of war.

They had struck a blow for the Union. The little town of Osceola was in ashes—a score of her citizens, who had dared resist the looting of their homes, lay dead or dying. The contents of the wagons told the rest.

"Everything disloyal," said General Lane, "must be cleaned out"; and, remarks his biographer, "never were orders more literally or cheerfully obeyed." Indeed, if we may believe the record, the disloyalty most feared by this worthy brigade was that which lurked in feather-beds and silver plate. They must rid the land of that, first and foremost.

"What do you think of this, sir?" demanded Colonel Trevilian of Dr. Lay when the news of that raid reached Grand Prairie.

"It is damnable, sir,—damnable!"

Mrs. Lay started. In all her life she had never heard her husband come so near swearing. The doctor's indignation was so deep and his chagrin so evident that Colonel Trevilian really said less than he had intended to say. He could not help remarking, however, that he un-

derstood Lane's own particular share of the spoils to have been a fine carriage.

"It is true, sir," returned the doctor. "I have it from good authority. I hunted that story down when I was in Kansas City yesterday. That man, sir, is a disgrace to the flag he follows!"

He wrote a letter that night to Governor Robinson of Kansas, whom he had met several times at the Gillis House, protesting, in the name of the Union men of the border, against such outrages. "They will force men into the Confederate army. They have already done so."

To this letter Governor Robinson replied that, weeks ago, he had written General Frémont, commander of the Western Department, urging that Lane's brigade be removed from the border. "I have told him," he wrote, "that what we have to fear, and do fear, is that Lane's brigade will get up a war by going over the line, committing depredations, and then returning to our State."

Dr. Lay took this letter over to Mr. Whalen, and after some consultation they decided to write a letter of protest from Jackson County themselves.

The letter was barely gone when still more alarming intelligence reached them. Osceola was several counties removed. The new danger was near at hand.

At that time there were no railroads in western Missouri, and the transportation of supplies became a question of some importance. About two hundred "prairie-schooners" and five or six hundred oxen were collected at Kansas City to be sent to Jefferson City and Rolla as terminal points. General Lane's Kansas troops were to escort them.

If the people along the route had heard that the escort was to be the devil's own, they would not have felt more consternation. They were wild with fear. Anything would be better than to risk such a visitation. Without

realizing that they were promising what they could by no possibility be sure of fulfilling, some misguided ones pledged the government authorities that if only the escort were not sent, the train should be unmolested.

The wagons started in two sections, twenty-four hours apart. They camped in neighboring towns, and in one ill-fated night were set upon, the wagons burned, and the cattle stampeded. It was probably the initial work of Quantrell's guerrillas, but the penalty fell upon the innocent, not the guilty.

It was made the pretext for Jennison's first raid—Jennison, the scourge of the border, the man who fought with lasso and torch! the scavenger whose grappling-hook took hold on all that was worth having and never let go!

From that day the people of the hapless section ate the bread of adversity and drank the water of affliction.

"A nation is come up upon my land," lamented the Hebrew prophet, "strong and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion. He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig trees. . . . A fire devoureth before them: and behind them a flame burneth; the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness."

He might have said it of the border.

The Sabbath that followed will not be forgotten by this generation nor the next in that vicinity. It is called "Jennison's Day" yet.

The prophet Joel certainly had that devoted land in mind.

"Tell your children of it," he says, "and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.

"That which the palmer worm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the canker-

worm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten."

The pious palmers came in Lane's footpad brigade; a swarm of locusts lighted when Jennison and his jayhawkers swept down upon the land; the noisome cankerworm, with mandibles multiplied, crept after them in the "red-legs." When *they* got through there was nothing left for the caterpillar!

Grand Prairie's day came later.

Through that fall and winter they waited and trembled. A counter-force was gathering in the woods around them. Seven or eight desperate men had met on Little Blue and chosen a leader. That leader was Quantrell—a name rivaling Jennison's for grim work from the first, and surpassing it when the last stroke fell.

They were not all outlaws in the beginning. Most of them went in with a wound that rankled. Some of them had seen the accumulation of a lifetime go up in smoke, while their families were thrust out upon the pitiless prairies. Others had followed blooded stock to the Kansas border, and gone back to take up their guns. One had seen a father's gray hairs dabbled in blood. Another mourned a son. Many there were who went because they could not stay in safety at home.

Every raid of Jennison sent recruits to Quantrell. It was safer to be in the brush than at home—and they would have revenge, at any rate.

The clans were gathering all along the Snai—that stream abounding in fastnesses and skirted by almost inaccessible precipices. It was a good spot for a lurking foe. It is historic yet. The hold-ups which have given rise to the worn joke, "Gentlemen, we are now entering Missouri—secrete your valuables," have many of them had their origin in this very "Cracker Neck," and some of the men who planned them are survivors of that band.

On Grand Prairie they held their breath. They knew that when the shock came it would be terrific. And they were in the storm-center.

Beverly was with Price, in southwest Missouri, making bullets from Granby lead and improvising cartridges. He was a lieutenant now and had sewed a bit of red flannel on his shoulder to show it, straps not being at hand.

He and Gordon had fought against each other at Lexington, but neither knew it. Gordon was shut up with beleaguered Mulligan, and Beverly fought behind the hemp breastworks that won the day. Ike Swamscott stood beside him.

They were all busy sewing one day at Keswick in the early spring of 1862. Mrs. Trevilian was finishing off a zouave jacket for Virginia, made from one of her father's black broadcloth coats turned. It was to go with a Garibaldi waist of magenta delaine which had once been white, but was now the fashionable war color by virtue of a bath in cudbear. Cudbear was an aniline dye which had the double merit of being bright and cheap. Everything was colored with cudbear during the war, from bonnet ribbons to carpet rags.

There are some persons who have an unconquerable aversion to cerise and all kindred shades. They are usually persons with good memories. The color brings up the instant suspicion, no matter how fine the article, that it has been dyed!

The Garibaldi waist and the zouave jacket were a part of Virginia's outfit for a visit to Matt Delano. It was to be worn with a black silk skirt of Miss Nannie's, flounced to the waist.

Virginia was trying on a pair of side-laced *drap d'été* gaiters that Uncle Reuben had just soled for her. She had got the pattern from Lide Merriweather, and it had gone all over the neighborhood. Dry-goods and shoes

were getting frightfully dear, but one could n't go barefoot. People hardly knew how they would have got along without the providential rise of that fashion in gaiters. Sometimes they were made of scraps of cloth, but *drap d'été* was the approved material. Somehow, the foreign name took off the home-made curse.

"It 's all ready to put on," said Mrs. Trevilian, looking at the jacket admiringly. "What do you think of it, Nan?"

"It is very pretty, indeed," returned Miss Nannie, "especially to have been made out of rags and gumption!"

There was a loud knock at the front door just then, and Mrs. Trevilian opened it. Two armed soldiers stood outside.

"Madam," said one respectfully, "we are belated, and would like to stay all night if we can."

"Certainly," said Mrs. Trevilian. No belated traveler had ever been turned from that door, no matter what was the color of his coat.

If he had been a friend and a Virginian instead of a foe and a Kansan, he could not have received more courteous treatment. He and his companion were entertained until bedtime and then put into the guest-chamber, being invited, in the meantime, to remain to family prayers. At breakfast they were served with hot waffles, which they liked, being rather surfeited with hardtack.

When they were starting away, the leader beckoned Mrs. Trevilian into the hall.

"Madam," he said, "you have treated me as a gentleman. I will prove to you that I am one. Jennison is coming through here to-morrow. If you have anything of value, *hide it*—and *lie like the devil!*"

CHAPTER XXIII

A DAY OF SOWING

THE warning threw them into the utmost consternation. What should they hide? Where would they hide it?

Messengers were despatched to different places to give the alarm—to Mr. Swamscott's, Mr. Pasco's, Miss Martha Robnett's—all of whom had sons or brothers in the Southern army, and to a number of others who had taken no part in the war, but were known to be Southern sympathizers.

Virginia got on Rob Roy and rode over to Dr. Lay's There was not much probability of the jayhawkers molesting them, Colonel Trevilian thought, but it would do no harm to put them on their guard.

Miss Nannie herself went over to Miss Tiny's. There was never any telling how they would take things, she said. Their attitude verified the assertion.

Miss Tiny, who was the leading spirit, simply stood up in the middle of the floor and declared that they would not turn over a hand. When her position was defined, Miss Tony supported it.

Were they receivers of stolen goods, she demanded, that they must put things into hiding? Certainly not! If these cutthroats and thieves chose to rob and kill, let them do it! If they had to be overrun by an abolitionized North, life was not worth much, anyway. No! She should hide nothing!

"But, Miss Tiny," urged Miss Nannie, "they proba-

bly won't kill you, and they *will* take your silver. You don't want to eat with pewter spoons just because we are in the hands of the abolitionized North, do you?"

"I shall hide nothing," said Miss Tiny, firmly. "It would be undignified and unworthy a Virginian to concede in such a manner any possible control they might have over my property! I hope I am not so lost to what —to what—"

She never finished it. She was accustomed to ask herself in any unexpected emergency: "What would they do in my native State?" or to say promptly in any known case: "They never do so in Virginia." To-day, the props were all knocked from under her. She was without precedent.

"Miss Tiny," Miss Nannie said, desperately, "if you won't do that, there is only one other thing to do. Brother William says to tell you you must put yourself under the protection of your brother in the Federal Army. He says to show them the letter you received from your brother Jeems telling of his determination to stand by the Union, and tell them that if they harm you in any way they will have to answer for it to a United States officer. He thinks that even the jayhawkers will not dare to molest the sisters of General Bascom."

At the beginning of this message Miss Tony had glanced with startled apprehension at her sister. That name had never been spoken even between themselves since the day the letter came. But a surging hope rose in her heart. This would be such a reasonable way of escape from the danger that threatened them. She waited, breathless, for her sister's reply.

Miss Tiny did not falter. She was as white as she would be when she was dead, but the hard lines around the mouth did not soften. She looked straight into the eyes of her visitor.

"*We have no brother,*" she said.

Miss Tony fell back in her chair and Miss Nannie went home in a rage.

"They deserve to lose everything they have!" she told her brother.

At Dr. Lay's, Virginia heard news that put the jayhawkers out of her mind. Gordon had been ordered South. He was coming down the next night to say good-by.

What had taken place under the honeysuckle was a sweet secret between these two. They had never confided it to a soul. Engagements were not made public then as now. But Mrs. Lay put her arms tenderly around Virginia when she went away and drew her to her heart. Perhaps she guessed.

There was a scurrying around on Grand Prairie that day. At Keswick they hid the silver and the little money they still had, and Colonel Trevilian's best suit, and Beverly's that he had left. It did not occur to them to hide women's clothing, which was unfortunate. Over the parlor was a dark garret, entered from the hall bedroom. Such valuables as they could collect were thrust in here, the door was papered over, a bed put up against it, and they felt reasonably secure.

There was not much sleep at Keswick that night, nor elsewhere on Grand Prairie. In the morning the Philistines were upon them.

The Trevilians really had very little idea what they were to expect; but they supposed, in the simplicity of their souls, that this was an army on its way somewhere, and that Jennison would be at its head. As they watched the soldiers coming up the road, their bayonets glittering in the morning sun, they were surprised to see how few there were,—only eight.

"This must be just the advance-guard," said Miss Nan-

nie. But in a moment some government wagons rolled into view,—empty ones, as they found out later,—and no more soldiers appeared.

"Can that be Jennison?" asked Miss Nannie, as she and her niece peered through the Venetian blinds,—"the one at the head, I mean.—Why-y! Have n't I seen that man somewhere?"

Virginia was thinking, with a sudden sinking of her heart, that she had seen the one behind him. They had no time, however, for further investigation, for the squad had now passed beyond the range of their vision.

"Aunt Nan!" said Virginia. "I believe in my soul that is—"

The sentence was unfinished, for at that moment there was a resounding, imperious knock at the door with the butt-end of a rifle.

Colonel Trevilian went to the door, and the three women crowded around him. Thus, when the door was opened, it happened that the whole family confronted—

Mr. Tigerman!

And what could be worse to confront in such a moment than a small vindictive soul, nursing a fancied grievance, and clothed with a little brief authority?

"Good morning, Tigerman," said the Colonel, as though he had met him yesterday.

The man swelled up like a frog. His day had come now.

"*Lieutenant* Tigerman, if you please, when you speak to me!" he said brusquely.

"Ah! Lieutenant Tigerman. And what can I do for you, sir?"

"I want your arms—and that pretty quick!" He ignored the ladies with fine disdain, remembering a time when one of them had ignored him. "Come! I don't want any of your palaver!"

"We have no arms," said Colonel Trevilian. "They were all taken from us at the beginning of the war by Colonel Jennison's orders, as you must know."

Virginia had been scanning the faces behind the lieutenant. There were but six of them. The one she was looking for was not there.

Tigerman pushed past the group in the hall and strode into Mrs. Trevilian's room on the left. How often he had longed to enter that house and hold familiar converse with its inmates! Well, the time had come at last!

"Unlock that drawer!" he commanded, pointing to a mahogany bureau, "and don't give me any more of your damned impertinence!"

There were seven armed men against him, and Colonel Trevilian unlocked the drawer.

While Tigerman was going through the bureau, and a soldier standing guard, the other men were scattering through the house. When this raid into Jackson County was planned, Tigerman had boasted with an oath that he would "gut" Keswick,—the rest might go where they pleased, but he would have that for his share,—and he had called for volunteers to assist. The men understood their privileges and availed themselves of them.

Finding that it was plunder and not blood they were after, Colonel Trevilian left them and hurried down to his stables, and the three helpless women stood by and watched the ravaging of their home.

Upon the pretext of looking for concealed weapons, wardrobes were rummaged and drawers ransacked. Trunks were emptied on the floor to make room for such things as they wanted to carry away—silk dresses, furs, jewelry, table-linen—all was grist that came to their mill.

Two of the men spying around went into the hall bedroom.

"It seems to me that 's a queer place for a bed," said one, looking around with a practised eye.

They whirled it aside, and the patch of new paper told its story. They did not even have the trouble of hunting up the Trevilian valuables. They were collected ready for them.

Miss Nannie stood by, speechless with rage. When they took her pearls—her beautiful necklace and brooch and pendant earrings that were to be Virginia's on her wedding day—her voice returned.

"You are brave soldiers!" she cried, maddened past all sense of fear. "Is this the way you fight your country's battles,—filching jewelry from bureau drawers?"

The man laughed lightly.

"You are a rebel, are n't you?"

"*Yes*, I 'm a rebel—to the backbone! If I had ever been Union, I would n't own it now!"

"*Nan!*"

But Miss Nannie was past stopping, even by that soft voice.

"Well, I guess we have a right to confiscate rebel goods," said the man, holding up an ashes-of-roses silk and then laying it in the trunk.

"Do you know what Florence Nightingale said?" demanded Miss Nannie.

"I believe I have n't the honor of Florence's acquaintance. What did she say?"

"She said, 'Governments confiscate; soldiers steal.'"

Mrs. Trevilian caught her by the arm and shook her. "Nan! these men will shoot you!"

"Sister Bettie, I don't care if they do! I *will* say what I think of it! It 's infamous!"

"Go ahead!" said the man, good-humoredly. "It does you good, and it don't hurt us."

In another room, Virginia was pleading for her zouave

jacket and *drap d'été* gaiters. It was no use. Ahab coveted the garden, even to the snowdrops and the lilies of the valley.

The government wagons were driven close to the door. Into them went household goods of every description—beds, mattresses, furniture, silk quilts, rose blankets, even heirlooms and family portraits. Mrs. Trevilian begged for the portraits, but Lieutenant Tigerman had a taste for the beautiful, if not for the good and the true, and family portraits are scarce in a new country.

Colonel Trevilian's best suit had been thrust hastily into Logan's box, in the hope that the negroes' belongings would not be searched. Vain hope! A tall soldier drew them out with gloating eyes.

"Fur de Lord's sake, master," said the negro, "don't take my breeches! Dem 's de ones I gwineter be married in."

The man took a look at the long legs in his grasp and then at the squat figure of the darky.

"You 're lying!" he said. "By the length of them, they belong to that long-legged old rebel in the house."

Virginia kept close to her father that day. She soon left the house to her mother and Miss Nannie. Locking her arm in his, she went with him as he tried to save his stock. While the others were at work in the house the day before, he had been busy outside. Rex, his blooded bull, had been taken down into the brush and corraled. The more valuable animals of other kinds were disposed of in like manner. They might have saved themselves the trouble. When the men came they called for Rex by name. His fame had gone abroad, and they had come for him.

It was when they were getting Rex that Virginia came face to face with Emmons Baird. He half spoke, being taken at a disadvantage, for he had not expected to see

her here. She only looked him over with scornful eyes. It *was* he that she had seen, then. She thought so.

Her look angered him as her words had once before.

"I 've come back," he said insolently, "to keep company with you."

"I see," she said quietly. "You went away like a thief in the night, and you 've come back like—a thief in the daytime. I suppose you can't help it."

Colonel Trevilian stood by, as many another man on Grand Prairie did that day, utterly powerless, as his choice herd was driven off. He would not beg. It would have done no good if he had. They needed stock.

Of all the people on that place and all the things they had set out to do, only Mammy was successful in holding her position. She had undertaken to save the meat.

They had fed soldiers before, and Mammy was tired of it. Moreover, there was the constant fear that the meat might some day be carted off. She set her wits to work to devise a plan whereby this might be prevented, and Mammy's wits were not to be despised. Somehow and somewhere, she had got hold of a spoiled ham. She kept it in a box, ready for the emergency.

That day one of Lieutenant Tigerman's soldiers came to the kitchen door and ordered dinner for twelve men. (Of course teamsters have to be fed as well as men that bear arms for their country.)

Mammy had seen the lieutenant looking into the smoke-house, and she recognized the fact that the emergency had come. She drew forth the ham and a turkey wing, talking volubly as she did so to prevent the man's getting away. She made savage passes at the meat, but did not cut into it.

"Hurry up, old woman! We can't stay here all day!"

Mammy flirted the wing higher and higher.

"Yaassir, Marse Colonel, I 's hurryin' all I kin. I jes' breshin' de skippers off dishyeah meat. Dey awful servigrous, skippers is, but I 'll git 'em out toreckly. Look hyeah, Marse Colonel!"

The man came close and surveyed the meat. "Ugh! —throw that to the hogs! Haven't you got anything else?"

"Nothin' but middlin'," said Mammy, regretfully. "We-all got some mons'us good fat middlin'. Look lak de skippers don't keer so much fur de side meat."

"Neither do we. Uncle Sam gives us enough sow-belly. Haven't you got any chickens?"

"Nary a chicken," said Mammy, glancing down toward the pasture as she spoke, in mortal terror lest the recreant fowls that she had been at pains to tie in a thicket should have escaped and taken this inopportune time for a stroll.

Just then Lieutenant Tigerman came around the house.

"I don't know but we 'd better go on to the next place for dinner, Lieutenant. Look at this meat."

Lieutenant Tigerman took one look and then stepped to the smoke-house door. A goodly array of hams hung from the joists.

"Are they all like that?" he asked. He was intending to fill in vacant spots with hams.

"Yaassir dis jes' a fair sample, I reckon," said Mammy, respectfully. "We-all had mons'us bad luck wid de meat dis yeah."

It is likely that if Colonel Trevilian had heard her, he would have upset the whole successful venture. He would rather have lost his hams than his reputation for curing them—that is, he would in '62.

The men turned away. Lieutenant Tigerman spoke a word to the soldier ready with the ladder, and Mammy put the ham back in the box with a chuckle.

"You done mighty well dat time, ole sow-leg! I gwine try you an' de skippers ag'in!"

And she did.

When that cavalcade crossed the boundary between the two States it looked like the train of some barbaric conqueror. All it lacked was the captives in chains. It stretched out miles and miles in length—herds of cattle, flocks of sheep, droves of swine. Blooded stock was rare in Kansas then. Many a man got his start that day.

Behind them was despair.

The next day Lieutenant Tigerman drove a government wagon into his private yard in the outskirts of Lawrence. Mrs. Tigerman came out to assist in the unloading.

"My land!" she said admiringly. "Ain't that a mattress worth having! There must be forty pounds of hair in it." Mrs. Tigerman had usually lain on shucks. "I bet they hated to see that go!"

Mr. Tigerman set down his end of a heavy pier-glass that had been the pride of Keswick and the country round. As he looked at it now, even he had his doubts about its feeling at home on his wife's rag-carpet. But then,—there might be other trips and other carpets! He took off his coat—his beautiful coat of blue, with the lieutenant's straps—and wiped his brow.

"I tell you," he said firmly, "this Union's got to be preserved, no matter what it costs! There ain't any sacrifices we can make that is too great!"

"That there ain't!" asseverated his wife, fervently, shaking out the folds of Miss Nannie Trevilian's lavender silk. "I 'm nothing but a poor weak woman, and it ain't much I can do, but I 'm going to stand by the government to the last! Did you git any spoons?"

CHAPTER XXIV

"TRIFLES LIGHT AS AIR"

REPRISALS came. That train was hardly out of the State before Mr. Westover, a Union man, was called out by Quantrell's men and shot on his own threshold. Mr. Whalen had his stable burned. Dr. Lay's last horse was taken—a calamity for a doctor. And so it went. When Gordon came down the next night, he found a household filled with apprehension for his safety and their own. They ate supper with locked doors and drawn shades.

It was late when he got over to Keswick. Virginia had been to the front door a dozen times, listening for hoof-beats. At last they came, and, catching up a shawl, she sped down the walk into the night. She was waiting for him at the gate.

"Gordon!" she whispered. It might not be he, and even if it were, there was no telling these days who would be skulking around.

"Virginia!"

It was the first time he had seen her since that night under the honeysuckle, and on that meeting nobody shall intrude.

As they started up the walk, the door opened, and a shaft of light fell upon them. Virginia drew Gordon hastily into the shadow. Then the light was obscured and Miss Nannie stood in the doorway. By the time they got to the porch they were all there to greet him, and he was taken into the family room.

If Gordon had had any haunting doubts about his reception, they were cast to the winds now. He almost wished, as the evening flew by, that they were not so fond of him, for he had not a word with Virginia alone. There was so much to talk about—the Tigerman raid, and all the exciting times of the last eight months—that it almost seemed as if the evening was gone before it was begun.

As he left Virginia at the steps, Gordon whispered, in a voice inaudible to the rest, "To-morrow we 'll go down to the grape-vine tree. I 've *got* to see you!" Then he was gone.

The next morning, as Gordon was taking a morning nap, he heard his father's voice calling him. He sprang up. There was a note of alarm in that voice.

"Gordon, did you fasten the stable door last night?"

"Yes, sir. Why?"

"Your horse is gone!"

"My horse!" echoed Gordon, in consternation. "Gone?" He was throwing on his clothes and going down the steps as he spoke.

"It 's gone! When Wash went down this morning to take care of him, the door was open and the horse gone. It must have been taken, I think,—though I thought it was just possible that you had not fastened the door and he might have got loose and started home."

"I am in hopes that is the way it was," said Gordon. "Still, I 'm sure I fastened the door. He might possibly have worked it loose."

"If it was a Kansas City horse it would go straight home."

"It was a Kansas City horse. Damon was lame, and I had to get another one. It is rather lucky he was. By Jove!" he said, shaking his head, as he took in the bearings of the case upon his safety. "I 'd hate to think he was stolen! Was the saddle gone?"

"I don't know," returned the doctor. "Wash has just come in. I did n't think to ask."

They went down to the stable themselves. There were fresh tracks around the lot, and the saddle was gone. That made it certain.

"Well," said Gordon, ruefully, as they told the tale at the house, "I begin to wish I was safely out of this! And I don't just know how I 'm going to get out."

"Colonel Trevilian is going to-morrow to Kansas City," said the doctor. "Perhaps—"

"Why could n't he go in the rockaway?" cried Sallie. "And Virginia could go along for protection."

"I wonder if the Colonel would dare to take me," Gordon said.

"Of course he would," returned his father.

And so the matter rested. It would n't be so bad, after all, Gordon thought.

At the breakfast-table Sallie said: "Gordon, did they tell you how Uncle Reuben saved the rockaway?"

"No. They told me about Mammy and the meat."

"Well, Uncle Reuben was about as smart as Mammy. He took off a wheel and hid it, and nobody knew where it was, and old Tigerman could n't take it off on three wheels, and so they have it still."

"Good for Uncle Reuben! I suppose, if it had n't been for him, Mrs. Tigerman and the cubs would have been riding in it to-day." And the raid kept them busy during the meal.

That morning, Virginia had to go down to Mrs. Tobe Taggart's on an errand. Mrs. Taggart was a weaver, and Mrs. Trevilian wanted a rag-carpet woven. She had had it in mind for some time to have one woven for Mammy's house, but the raid had changed things. The dining-room carpet was presumably being put down in Kansas this morning, and the lady of the house and Mammy and

Miss Nannie were busy dyeing and cutting and sewing rags to replace it. The affairs of the household must go on in spite of war—sometimes because of it.

Virginia was in something of a hurry this morning, having in mind the meeting at the grape-vine tree, and was rather reluctant to undertake the errand. She had, herself, an undutiful feeling that they had lost a good deal of time last night.

Having finished her business conference with Mrs. Taggart, she started toward the blocks where she had left her horse. She looked around her curiously as she went down the steps into the unfloored passageway between the two rooms that comprised the house. She had heard of that passageway from Miss Nannie.

It was open in front, and in it was stored everything that did not have a definite place elsewhere—saddles, riding-skirts, bags of grain, and sacks of wool, the grindstone where it would be handy, and the big wheel just now not in use. From the joists hung strings of red peppers and dried okra, hanks of warp, and flapping garments waiting for their sacrifice. Great bags of carpet-rags in balls proclaimed the nature of Mrs. Taggart's calling.

Virginia smiled to herself, recalling Miss Nannie's succinct account of the place the first time she ever saw it. "Sister Bettie!" she had exclaimed hysterically and with cumulative emphasis, "I tell you there is everything on the face of God's *earth* in that passage but the mare and colt!"

Rene went out with her to the horse-blocks. It was no unusual thing to do, but the girl was so silent about it that it did not seem a simple act of politeness. She hardly seemed to notice what Virginia was saying about the chickens in the yard. She led the horse up to the blocks, and, as Virginia thanked her and was gathering up the reins, she stopped her with a gesture.

"There 's something I want to say to you," she said. "Wait till maw goes in."

She stooped to tug at the girth. When she raised her head, Mrs. Taggart had gone into the house.

"What is it, Rene?" Virginia said in a low tone. She was startled at the girl's manner.

"It 's about Gordon Lay," she said. "He 's home, I see."

Virginia started. She did not think that any living soul knew of Gordon's coming but his own family and hers. They had taken precautions to keep it even from the negroes. But Rene, with her hand on the pommel of the saddle, was looking straight into her face and asserting it as if she knew.

"What makes you think so?" she asked.

"I don't think so," said Rene, bluntly. "I *know* so. I saw him."

"Where in the world did you see him?" asked Virginia, thrown off her guard.

"Down at old man Chandler's last night, talkin' to Lois. It 's about that I wanted to speak to you."

"About his talking to Lois Chandler!" exclaimed Virginia, with a flash of anger.

"No," said Rene; "about his bein' down there. Let me tell you something! This ain't no safe place for Gordon Lay! These woods are too full of bushwhackers!"

"I think you must have been mistaken about its being Gordon," Virginia said incredulously

"I ain't mistaken," Rene replied quietly. "I know Gordon Lay when I see him! And I saw him last night."

"But, Rene," persisted Virginia (she felt sure she could trust the girl), "he was at our house last night. You could n't have seen him at the Chandlers'."

"I tell you I did!" said Rene impatiently. It seemed to her that Virginia was more concerned trying to prove

that Gordon was not at the Chandlers' than in finding out about his danger. "I had been down past there huntin' a cow. I saw 'em just as plain as I see you. It was n't real dark. Gordon and Lois was standin' out by the lilac bush, and he was talkin' to her, and she was cryin'. I don't know what she was cryin' about. Maybe her paw was sick. But you tell him what I say. There 's danger for him down here! I know what I 'm talkin' about!"

She glanced cautiously around her, and then came closer to Virginia, speaking in a low, tense tone. "There 's men around here would as soon kill Gordon Lay as to stick a hawg. I 've heard 'em talk!"

"Re-e-nie!" called Mrs. Taggart from the passageway, "you 'll take cold out thar 'thout any bonnet on."

"Go on!" said Rene, releasing her hold of the pommel. "And you tell him what I say!"

As she rode away, Virginia's soul was in a tumult. What was the danger that threatened Gordon? Who was it that was seeking his life? And then, her first thrill of fear over, came other questions no less agitating. . . . Was this thing true? Had Gordon gone to Lois Chandler before he had come to her? and that after all these months of separation? . . . It could n't be! She would not believe it! It was false! She gave her horse a cut with her whip and then reined him in suddenly. She did not want to get home too quickly. She must give herself time to think. . . . Rene must be mistaken—of course she was! And all the time she felt in her inmost soul—the one that tells us things and will not take them back, and cannot be silenced by argument—that Rene was not mistaken. She might mistake some other man, but not Gordon!

Virginia remembered his lateness in coming last night. And this was the reason! First of all, he had gone to Lois Chandler! Anger was getting the better of her.

Then she reined herself in as suddenly as she had reined her horse. How absurd for her to feel that way! Of course, if Gordon had gone,—and she almost admitted now in her own mind that he had,—he undoubtedly had some good reason for doing so. Probably, as Rene had suggested, Mr. Chandler might be sick and Gordon had gone over with some message or something from his father. She felt the flimsiness of this explanation before it was formulated. Dr. Lay would never let Gordon take a risk like that.

But maybe Dr. Lay was sick, too, and could n't go with the medicine, and Gordon had insisted upon taking it (as of course he would), and then had waited till nearly dark so as to lessen the danger. Then Lois might have come out to the door with him so as not to disturb her father, and have been anxious and nervous, and it would have been the most natural thing in the world for her to have cried a little when Gordon sympathized with her—as of course he would. She drew a breath of relief at this, feeling that she had been sensible enough at last to see a perfectly natural, reasonable explanation of it all.

But—

Why had n't he said something about it last night when she asked him why he was so late?

She reined her horse in to a walk then and tried to recall exactly what Rene had said about it all. It had n't seemed strange to Rene that he was down at the Chandlers'. Perhaps she had seen him there before. What Rene had thought of was Gordon's danger.

At that she quickened her horse's pace. She was beginning to think of this herself. Gordon might even now be down at the grape-vine tree—and the woods full of bushwhackers! She would think no more of this silly thing, she said, with her lips set firmly together. Of all things in the world a jealous, suspicious woman was the

worst! He had probably forgotten to say anything about it last night,—and no wonder, with so many things to talk about and think of. Anyway, she knew it was all right, for Gordon was all right! Now! And her lips were firmer than before.

When she got to the house, they told her that Gordon had been there and had gone down to the grape-vine tree. Virginia could hardly deliver Mrs. Taggart's message in her haste to be gone. There was no telling what might happen to him down there in the woods.

But when she reached the old trysting-place, and he came to meet her with outstretched arms and folded her to his heart, she forgot Rene's warning and all else in the joy of being with him again. They had been separated so long, and the months had been such weary ones!

When she remembered her fears and told him of them, he drew her to him and kissed her and smiled down into her eyes, and said he would rather risk the bushwhackers than the family. He could n't have a word with her there. They would make sure of this morning, anyway.

And listening to his tender words, she was beguiled out of her other fears, too, and felt ashamed as she recalled them. With her hand in his and looking up into the honest eyes that had never turned away from hers in all these years, those fears seemed base and ignoble.

As they sat there talking the hours away, lost to danger and the world, they heard a sudden crackling sound behind them, as of a cautious step. Virginia sat upright, and Gordon grasped his revolver and leveled it in the direction of the sound. It was a moment of suspense, but following the step came another, and then a grunt, and a strolling pig stepped into view. The laugh that rang out startled him as much as he had startled them, and he stood not on the order of his going.

But the incident, trivial as it was, brought to Virginia's

mind a fresh remembrance of Rene's warning, and she would not stay longer.

When they reached the house, there was a fire in the parlor and the sofa drawn up before it.

"Gordon," Miss Nannie said regretfully, "we will have to leave you to Virginia this morning. Sister Bettie and I are busy with our dyeing. You won't be disturbed. I have locked the front door, and drawn down the blinds if anybody should be prying around. Virginia, you treat Gordon well. He is the only decent Federal I know of." And with this parting shot she was gone.

The memory of that day stayed long with Gordon Lay. He carried it with him to Southern battle-fields; he thought fondly of it as he sat beside the smoldering camp-fire; he dreamed of it in his lonely midnight hours; he lived it over in a bewildered way years afterward, recalling every word, every look, every motion of the woman he loved, and trying vainly to recall his own.

At dinner it was Mammy that waited on the table. Mammy could be trusted with any secret, and it was well to be on the safe side.

Colonel Trevilian had been going around the neighborhood that day, looking after claims that were to be presented to the commanding officer at Kansas City tomorrow. Gordon was easily persuaded to stay to supper, that he might see him. Again and again through that day Virginia thought of what Rene had told her; again and again it was on her lips to ask him frankly what it meant. And each time she would think: "I will not! It will seem as if I doubt him. I will not bring up anything —anything—to mar this day!"

Before he left they had arranged for the trip in the morning. It was raining now, and the probabilities were that the day would be bad; but it would be all the better, Colonel Trevilian said, for their plans. They would be

less likely to meet anybody on the road; and, besides, that would be a good reason for putting the curtains down.

"I will have Reuben drive," he said, "and I will sit in front with him. Together, we will make a pretty good screen. On the back seat, Gordon, and with the curtains down, you will be pretty well protected from view."

Gordon thought, with grateful heart, of that long ride with Virginia beside him. It would take nearly all day. He had resisted the maddening desire to stay with her through the evening, remembering his mother. And so, buoyed up by the thought of the morrow, he said good-by.

When Virginia Trevilian knelt that night by her white bed and lifted up her virgin prayer, this was the burden of it:

"O God! keep him—keep him—*keep* him! . . . and make me worthy of him! . . . He *is* true! I *know* it!"

CHAPTER XXV

A DARK NIGHT'S RIDE

THAT night, while Gordon lay on his bed, dreaming waking dreams of another day of bliss, and Virginia Trevilian was sending up fervent prayers for his safety, a strange company was gathering in Tobe Taggart's "big room,"—which, by the way, was no larger than the rest of the rooms in the modest log house, but was so designated because it was the state apartment, reserved for guests. In that hospitable section even the lowliest home had its place for guests. Many other things were lacking, but never this.

On the south side of the passageway which had so excited Miss Nannie's mirth was the family room, with the children in the loft. On the north side was the "big room," its two high, rounded beds suggesting the plucking of generations of geese, and gorgeous just now in "rising sun" quilts and diminutive pillows edged with crocheted lace. At the windows were paper shades, with gay ladies and gentlemen on them,—and to-night the shades were closely drawn.

Above this room was Rene's bedchamber in the roof, reached by a ladder. One looking at the house from the front would never have guessed that there was a second story, but its presence was attested by a small window in each gable. There were no windows below them, the gable-ends of that house being mainly occupied in taking care of the immense fireplaces and the scarcely less immense outside stone chimneys that led therefrom.

Rene and her young sister had, by invitation, ascended their ladder early, so as to be out of the way of the guests.

"They 'll be gone before you want to get up," Mr. Taggart had said when she had complained of this apparent caging of herself and Lizy Ann. There was a note of significance in his words that did not escape Rene's attention, but she was not much accustomed to questioning her father, and lighted her candle with no more words.

Lizy Ann's breathing was giving evidence of sleep when the men entered the room below. A considerable time had elapsed—long enough, in fact, for Rene to take out the lower sash and hang an old quilt in front of the window after the child was asleep. She could hardly have told why she did it, but that something was on foot she knew,—she had seen the men talking around the wood-pile,—and she wanted an exit.

She had let down the trap-door, which gave the two rooms a decent appearance of privacy, but there was a big crack in the door, widening at one end, and a knot-hole. Rene's eye was over this hole.

There were three of the men besides her father, all heavily armed with revolvers, though they carried neither guns nor sabers. One had a bowie-knife in his belt. They were shaggy and ill-kempt, and had the look of men who were hunted and hunting, for they kept their revolvers close at hand and drew them sometimes at an unexpected noise. Once, when a rose-bush scraped against the window-pane, every man cocked his pistol and stood ready, looking a little sheepish when the cause of the noise was ascertained.

Rene, from her point of observation above, surveyed this company with interest. She knew these men. One of them was Hank Menafee, who had turned corners so furiously at the barbecue—that was his way of doing

things. Hank had just come,—he had not been with them when she had seen them at the wood-pile.

"Jeff 'lows we 'd better not all go to sleep at one time," suggested Hank Menafee when they began to lounge on the beds.

"Shucks!" responded Mr. Taggart, contemptuously. "Ole Tige is unchained, and I reckon he 's got better years than ary one of you—"

"Yes, and he nose more," added Dick Renfrew, who was young.

"Oh, shut up, Dick! This ain't no time for puns."

"I reckon Dick would pun—or try to—ef it was the jedgment day," said Mr. Taggart. "I 've known men killed for less than a pun like that one. But people that pun jes' natchelly has to get 'em in, good or bad."

"I reckon you 'll see one killed to-night for less," answered the one called Dick. "I don't quite stomach that job, myself."

The man that had said nothing turned sharply upon him. "Well, stay at home, then," he said gruffly. "We don't want no backin' out."

"Shucks!" said Tobe Taggart, soothingly; "nobody ever knowed of Dick Renfrew's backin' out of anything. He 's game. Ain't you, Dick?"

"I ain't a-backin' out," said Dick, "and Jeff knows it, but I tell you I don't like this thing of killin' fur nothin'."

"Nothin'! You call it nothin' for a man's house to be burnt over his head, and his stock run off, and—"

"Well, he ain't done it!"

"His side done it!"

"Look here, boys," remarked Tobe, authoritatively, "quit yo' quarrelin' and go to sleep! Ef we get off at two o'clock—"

The girl at the knot-hole, with senses strained to the utmost, started. *We!* Was he in it, too?

The gruff man looked apprehensively up at the trap-door. The eye was not there now, but an ear was pressed close to the knot-hole.

"Who 's up thar?" he asked suspiciously.

"Nobody but my two gals," returned Tobe Taggart, with warmth. "Ef you are so all-fired skeery, Jeff Dicus, maybe you 'd better go somewheres else for your meetin'-place! There ain't no spies around here. I can tell you that!"

It was the gruff man's turn now to play pacificator, and when this was done to the satisfaction of all Tobe withdrew.

There was not much said after he was gone, but the girl who was playing eavesdropper was quick-witted, and she knew the gang. A man was to be killed. That much was sure. And killed for nothing,—Dick had said for revenge. That meant he was on the Union side.

Who was the man? She could only conjecture.

She was getting weary of her cramped position and the small returns it was bringing her, when Dick spoke again.

"Say, Jeff, you can shoot the boy if you want to. He 's fightin' on the other side. But derned if I 'll see the old doctor harmed! He took me through a spell of pneumony last winter."

Rene sat up.

It was Gordon Lay!

She crept into bed then, and lay with wide-open eyes staring up at the roof. And her father was in it, too!

As she lay there, her mind alert and active as her senses had been when she was on the trap-door, a fierce anger surged within her. They should n't do this thing! What right had they to take Gordon Lay's life? He had n't harmed them. No, nor would he, even if he had the chance!

She raised herself cautiously on one elbow then and listened. She could hear the heavy breathing of the three men. They had learned to catch sleep when they could. There was never any telling when it would be over.

She sat at the side of the bed in the darkness, thinking out a plan. She must perfect every detail before she made a move. She could n't light the candle. Where were her shoes? She felt along stealthily for them. Ah! here they were. She put them inside the waist of her calico dress. Fortunately, she had not removed her clothes.

She reached for a shawl that lay across the bed. Why had n't she pulled up the ladder! A sheet would not be long enough to reach the ground after it was tied securely. She had jumped from greater heights, but she knew the splash on the wet ground beneath would betray her.

She had never stirred from her place. It was her mind only that was groping around the loft for something that would let her down. That was all she cared for,—only to get out and on her mare, Kit! It was raining hard, the night was starless and dark, save for an occasional flash of lightning, but she cared not for that. If she could only get down!

Her mind traveled around the loft, taking in the things stowed away under the edge of the roof. It traveled slowly, for there were many obstructions. Finally, it struck—a thrill passed through her—she would never say again there was n't any such thing as Providence, as she had said the other day to Grandma Tolles—it struck the old bed-cord that had been replaced by a new one.

She found it definitely with her brain before she moved. Then she went noiselessly across the room to where it was. Her hand closed upon it exactly where she thought it would be. She had even calculated the distance. The human mind has room to stow away a good

deal of rubbish and find it again, if one will only give thought sufficiently concentrated to the matter.

She unrolled it, matched ends, and tied knots a foot and a half apart all the way down. Then she fastened it to the bed-post and made her way to the window, thanking God with a fervor new to her—for Rene was not very religious—that she had taken out the window. They would certainly have heard her if she had had to do that now.

In two minutes she had gone down that rope like a cat, stopping near the bottom to say softly, "Tige! Tige!" The dog licked her hand. In two minutes more she was saying soothing things to Kit, who whinnied low. The saddle was in the passageway, but Rene was not dependent upon saddles. She found a bridle by feeling for it —and was off.

It was three good miles to Dr. Lay's over summer roads. They were doubled in March, when each step was as far down as forward. She went slowly at first, startled, every time Kit's foot came out of the mud, for fear the sound would be heard; faster when the distance grew; and then at a mad gallop when she struck the prairie road.

She was barebacked and astride. A bonnet was not within reach, and she had tied on an old hat of her father's that her hand chanced to touch. The storm that had been threatening all evening was upon them, but she was glad of it. Nobody else would be likely to be out. The lightning flashes showed her that Kit knew the road.

The creek was up. There had been a thaw that had set all the brooklets running, and the rain had been steady for hours. She was not quite sure of the ford, but Kit would know. She gathered up her skirts, spoke soothingly to the mare, and plunged in.

And Kit missed the ford!

There was an agonizing five minutes for Rene Taggart then. The mare, finding her footing gone, plunged, snorted, and began to swim. Rene dug her heels into Kit's sides, and clung to her neck with the grip of despair. The current took them down the stream, but the brave animal's feet touched a bank at last, and up she plunged.

After that it was easy. There were no more streams to cross. It was dark at Dr. Lay's when the girl stopped before the door and sent out a ringing "Hello!"

It was the ordinary call at a doctor's house, and it was a woman's voice, but Mrs. Lay, not the doctor, answered it from the window. They took no unnecessary chances in those days.

"Who is it?"

"It 's me. Rene Taggart."

"Oh! Did you want the doctor, Rene? Is anybody sick?"

"No'm. But—"

"Get off and come in, child. I 'll be down in a minute."

When she got in they were all there,—even Sallie, shivering over the balusters.

Gordon took her by the hand. "What is it, Rene?"

"They are after you," she said simply. "I came to tell you."

"After me! Who?"

"The men. Quantrell's men."

"What have I done?"

"Nothing. They are going to kill you for what Jennison 's done, I reckon."

She told of the plot she had heard, leaving out her father and Hank Menafee, and, indeed, giving no names. They were Quantrell's men. That was all she would say. The circumstantial exactness of her report left them no reason to doubt its accuracy.

"I am sure I don't know what I can do," said Gordon. "Every horse on the place has been taken—mine with them. Fortunately, they did not know I was here, or they would have got me then."

"Maybe you could get one from Colonel Trevilian," called Sallie from the stairs.

"You have n't got time for that." cried Rene. "I tell you they 'll be here before you get off, if you don't hurry. Take Kit."

"Your horse? What will you do?"

"Oh, I 'll get home some way. Go on! Take Kit and go! When you get to Kansas City turn her loose. She 'll come back. Oh, hurry! hurry!"

"Suppose somebody should take her up?"

"If anybody can catch her they are welcome to!" she said proudly.

"Rene, if your father finds out that you have done this what will he do?"

"I don't know!" Her lips grew white, but her eyes blazed. "I don't care! Take Kit and go!"

"I 'll take you home first," he said. "It 's a good long time till two o'clock."

"If you 'll get me across the creek," she said, the horror of that crossing stiffening her tongue, "I won't mind the rest. I know a short cut."

Good-bys were said quickly in those days. It was a straining embrace and a "God bless you!" and he was gone.

She rode behind him, her arms around his waist.

"Hold tight, Rene," he said. "There 's no time to lose."

It recalled Virginia and their ride after her girth broke. It was what he had said to her. He might never see her again!

They crossed the creek in safety. He took her to the

pasture fence. Then she slipped down from her seat, and he stood beside her. He threw the bridle over his arm and took her hands.

"Rene, you have saved my life! God bless you!"

He held her cheeks between his hands—her cold, wet cheeks,—and kissed her on the lips. Then he was gone.

Rene Taggart walked home in a dream. She could feel the touch of his lips yet. It was raining, but she did not know it. She stepped into puddles, and the water gurgled in her shoes, but she did not feel it. She touched her lips once with the tips of her fingers to see if they were the same.

The next morning, Mrs. Taggart went early to Rene's room. The bed-cord, with all its knots untied, was rolled up and tucked away under the roof. The wet quilt was under the bed. Rene's dress hung before the window.

"Did you hear anybody prowlin' around here last night?" Mrs. Taggart stood beside her daughter's bed.

"No'm." Rene's heart was beating like a trip-hammer.

"Well, Kit 's missin' this mornin'. Must 'a' got loose, I reckon, in the night."

The ice was so thin that Rene did not dare to risk a step.

Her mother turned from the bed to the garment hanging in front of the window.

"Why, Rene Taggart, what 's the matter with your dress? It 's as wet as sop!"

"It is? I left it in front of the window, and I reckon it got rained on. It was a powerful beatin' rain."

Mrs. Taggart looked at her sharply. She was putting two and two together.

"Humph!" she said didactically to her offspring. "Don't never be a bigger fool than you have to, Rene!"

CHAPTER XXVI

DAVID—

RENE'S good mare saved the day for Gordon Lay. Within twenty-four hours he was on his way South with his regiment to join Grant, and in much less time Kit was whinnying at Tobe Taggart's ramshackle barn.

The Trevilians heard the whole story from Sallie, who came over before breakfast to tell it—Rene's midnight ride and Gordon's escape—the terror of that waiting, and the coming of the men at last—of their rage at finding Gordon gone, and how they had searched every cranny of the house for him, and at last gone off threatening vengeance upon the whole family because he could n't be found. "I actually believe they would have killed Uncle Lay," she concluded, "if it had n't been for Dick Renfrew!"

It was a thrilling tale as Sallie told it, and she had a breathless audience. In the chorus of rejoicings raised at Gordon's escape, there was just one minor chord—and that was sounding so deep in a girl's heart that it was not heard—the rockaway trip would not now be necessary! And straightway Virginia began to think of the many, many, *many* things she had meant to talk about with Gordon that day. Among them was Rene's warning of the day before. She had made up her mind to tell him that in a casual way, and then if he chose to explain he could do so; if not—well, he would know that she knew about it. Now—that opportunity was gone.

The day was a long one to Virginia Trevilian. In the afternoon, she went down to Tobe Taggart's, making the carpet an excuse. She hoped to have a word with Rene again at the blocks.

But when she got there, poor Rene was in bed in the family room with a cold and a high fever. There seemed no chance of private talk at all, and Virginia was feeling desperately disappointed; but when Mrs. Taggart stepped into the passageway for the steelyards, Rene whispered: "Kit 's back." She knew that Virginia had heard the story before this.

Mrs. Taggart was back before she could answer, but a quick gleam of intelligence had passed between the two girls. Kit was furnishing the second chapter of the story.

THEY had heard good news from Gordon and about him in the months and months that had passed since then. He was still with Grant The Twenty-fifth Missouri had done valiant service at Pittsburg Landing. He had been made a lieutenant after that. Before Corinth it had shown its ability to work as well as fight for the flag. On the battle-field and in the fever-laden swamps, Gordon had borne a charmed life. He hoped they might soon be sent to Missouri, he wrote. There had been talk of the regiment's being ordered back to recruit, but he did not know when.

Only once had he been home since that night when he rode through the darkness and the storm on Rene's horse, —danger on every side and certain death behind,—and then Virginia had not seen him. He came, as he thought, to his father's death-bed.

It was on Christmas morning, down in Mississippi, that the message had reached him which brought him home "Come at once" it said "if you would see your father alive"

He got a furlough and traveled night and day. When he got there the crisis was past, and, with his father on the road to recovery, he might have had a pleasant visit, after all, had it not been for his disappointment about Virginia. She had gone down to Lexington to visit Lide Merriweather for a few weeks, and Dr. Lay's attack had been so sudden and violent that the telegram, Gordon's reply, and his coming had all taken place without her knowing a word of it. He wrote to her at once, and waited till the last minute; but his furlough was short and the distance long, and his return was imperative. When she reached home after receiving his delayed letter, he was on his way South,—and she turned the face of her soul to the wall.

It seemed to her that she could not bear it! Poor child! she was taking first readings in a lesson we all learn by heart after a while—that we can bear a good many things in this world, simply because there is nothing else we can do. She took Gordon's letter, which Sallie had brought her, and cried herself to sleep over its burden of love and disappointment. He could not tell, he said, when he would be back—not till the war was over, perhaps.

"Miss Figinia," said Mammy, the next morning, as she made up the bed, "don't you think it was powerful resky in Marse Gordon to go walkin' roun' de woods whilst he was hyeah?" There were no secrets from Mammy.

"He did n't," said Virginia. "Sallie says he hardly went out of the house. He did n't even come over here."

"He was down in de woods," Mammy returned. "Reuben seed 'im."

"It could n't have been Gordon," insisted Virginia, incredulously. "Uncle Reuben probably mistook somebody else for him."

"Humph!" replied Mammy, with that implicit faith

in her spouse's statements that all good and unsophisticated wives have. "I reckon Reuben knows Marse Gordon, Miss Figinia! . . . An' de Chan'ler gyurl, too!"

"The Chandler girl!" Virginia turned from her bureau to look at Mammy.

"Yaas'm. Him an' her was standin' down in de grove when Reuben seed 'em—dat grove dar in de doctor's pasture. Reuben say she was cryin', an' look lak Marse Gordon was tryin' to pacify 'er."

Virginia turned to the bureau,—taking pins out of the cushion, and sticking them in again. Lois Chandler crying and Gordon trying to pacify her! . . . Sallie had told her that he had not been out of the house; . . . evidently, this was some meeting that Sallie knew nothing about.

"Now, anybody else could 'a' seed 'em jes' same as Reuben," pursued Mammy, in an expostulatory manner; "an' ef it had been one er dat Snai gang, he 'd 'a' been gone up de spout! Yaas'm, he would so!"

"What was Lois crying about?" asked Virginia, abruptly.

"I don't know'm. Maybe it was 'bout her daddy. He 's been mighty bad off dis fall, ole man Chan'ler has. But I don't know'm. Reuben could n' hyeah nothin' but jes' one time. Den he say she kinder wrung her hands an' cried out an' say: 'It 's too late now! it 's too late!' He couldn' hyeah what Marse Gordon say,—he talk so low,—but look lak he was tryin' to pacify 'er. Reuben he 'low maybe she meant it was too late for her to be goin' home by herself; but I don't reckon a gyurl would take on so 'bout dat! Don't seem so."

"She was probably talking to him about her father," said Virginia, with rather ostentatious unconcern. "Gordon is very sympathetic when anybody is in trouble."

"Yaas'm, he is so,—Marse Gordon is," assented

Mammy,—" an' he 's foolhardy, too!" she added under her breath.

At the dinner-table that day Virginia remarked incidentally: " Mammy says old man Chandler has been quite poorly. Have you heard anything about it, mother?"

" Yes. I was over at Dr. Lay's one day last week when Lois came over for medicine for him. She seemed quite unhappy about him. I really felt sorry for the child. It was the very day before Gordon went away."

" It was too bad, Virge, about your missing Gordon," said Miss Nannie.

Virginia helped herself to a biscuit. It seemed as if a band that had been tightening around her heart had suddenly been loosed.

" Yes," she said brightly,—so brightly that it had almost the appearance of indifference,—" it is too bad. But he 'll come again, I reckon."

Miss Nannie looked at her a moment and then went on with her dinner. " I don't more than half believe she does care," she thought. " I was sure last night she did."

That night Virginia wrote Gordon a long, long letter, full of love and regret.

About a week after this, Mammy came to her one day with a folded paper in her hand.

" Miss Figinia," she said, " hyeah 's a letter or somepn Reuben told me to give you. He went over to de doctor's dis mornin' to take 'em some sausage meat an' spareribs, an' he foun' dis hyeah paper down dar in de grove, whar Marse Gordon an' dat Chan'ler gyurl was talkin' dat day. Reuben he 'low maybe it 's somepn dat 'll git Marse Gordon in trouble ef it falls in de wrong hands,—some war paper or somepn,—an' he say: ' Dilsey, you take dat to Miss Figinia.' So hyeah it is."

Virginia took the paper and unfolded it, feeling quite

justified in doing so. It seemed a sort of emergency of war.

As she read it the blood faded from her cheeks, though her heart was pumping hard. It was a note from Gordon to Lois Chandler. It had been pulled from her pocket, probably, with her handkerchief, and left unnoticed on the ground. It said:

"DEAR LOIS:

"I *must* see you once more. And yet I have been warned not to go down to your house again. Can't you make some excuse to come up to my father's this evening, just before night? Then I can see you down in the grove.

"GORDON."

Mammy had been watching Virginia with alarm—startled at the whiteness of her face.

"Is it all right, honey?" she asked anxiously. "Would it 'a' got him into trouble ef it had n't fell into yo' hands?"

"Yes," said Virginia, with an ironical curtness that was lost upon her auditor; "but it has fallen into just the right hands."

She slipped the note into her bosom—not because she wanted it there, but because she did not wish anybody to see it. Then, cautioning Mammy to say nothing about it to anybody, she went to her own room. She took the note out and spread it open before her. A fierce anger possessed her. Her color had come back now, and her lips were tight, a sure sign with Virginia that a conflict was on. "He *must* see her." . . . It was urgent, she thought scornfully,—most urgent! . . . "Once more." . . . That implied that he had seen her before. . . . This was only one of many times, perhaps, that they had met in the woods. . . . Perhaps they had even met sometimes at the

grape-vine tree!—and her lips were tighter than ever then. She had spent hours of these autumn days down there, dreaming of him. . . . "Some excuse to come." . . . He had even concocted the plan—Lois could n't be trusted, apparently, to think up as simple a thing as that! Then her tumultuous thoughts went back to what Uncle Reuben had heard: "It is too late now! it is too late!" What *did* she mean? And Virginia's heart beat fast.

She was not long in this mood. When her anger had spent itself gentler thoughts came, and more trustful ones, if not more reasonable. Why should she believe evil of Gordon, she asked herself. Had she ever known him to be untrue before? Then she stopped, struck with the word she had used. Before? did she say *before?* That sounded as if she thought him so now,—and she certainly did not. How could she when she had not even given him a chance to explain! Probably everything that seemed strange and inexplicable about it all would be made as plain as day when once she could see him and tell him all about it. Why, there were a hundred ways of explaining things that people never thought of at first! Somebody might have written that note and left it where it would be picked up—just to tease her or to try her—she had read of such things in stories. She got the note out then and looked at it. . . . It was certainly Gordon's writing.

She had determined, in that first wild burst of anger, to send the note to him and demand an explanation. In her softened mood she was glad—so glad!—she had not done it. It was never wise, her mother had often told her, to do things rashly. Oh, no, it was much better to wait! . . . But it was hard! . . . Then she would go over that explanation. He would come after a while, and then they would sit together in the summer-house, and she would look into his eyes, and he would hold her hand and say, in his quiet way that always calmed her and made her

want to rest on his strength: "Why, Virginia, dear, it was so—and so—and so"—and it would all be as clear as day; and then Gordon would gather her to his arms and say she was a foolish little girl to be so troubled about it,—but that it *had* seemed strange, perhaps,—she knew Gordon would acknowledge that when she had told him all.

And then—for these communings with doubt and trust and herself were generally in the night-watches—she would take from under her pillow the picture he had had made for her in Kansas City, and lay her hot cheek on the cold, insensate glass and sob: "It 's all right, Gordon!—I know it 's all right,—but—it *hurts* me so!"

CHAPTER XXVII

—AND JONATHAN

THEY had seen more of Beverly than of Gordon. Beverly had been South with Price, had fought on "Bloody Hill" the day that Lyon fell; and had slipped his head into the noose more than once while coming back to recruit. He had the gift of persuasion, this laughter-loving boy, and many a man had followed his leadership into the army of the Lost Cause.

Every trip brought him through Jackson County—now in North Missouri, now circling through the river counties. They never knew when he was coming—hardly knew when he was gone. There were bird-calls from the pasture that Virginia came to listen for. Then somebody would mount guard while there was a hurried interview down in the woods or out in the orchard, or, sometimes, in between the corn-rows, where there were no telltale listeners.

He did not come often to the house. There was too much risk; and, then, he did not want to bring retribution on the family for his home-coming. But he came to think that he, too, bore a charmed life, and could come and go at will. He became expert at eluding pursuit, and felt a boyish elation in dangers risked and overcome.

He was there just the week before Gordon came home on his furlough, staying longer that time than he had ever stayed before. It was the first time he had seemed reluctant to go back. War was a dreadful thing, after all, he told his mother,—he would be glad when it was over.

She remembered, afterward, that during that visit he used to speak to her sometimes rather abruptly, after intervals of silence, saying, "Mother," as if he had some thing of moment to say, and then making some light remark that did not accord with the sober look on his face. It went to her heart to see him lose the buoyancy of youth and take on the seriousness of manhood. Of course it must come in time, but it seemed to be coming so fast. It was the shadow of war! she used to think, with a sad shake of the head. War was a blighting, withering thing!

She asked him one day if he ever heard from Gordon now. Yes, he said, he had had a letter from him a few weeks ago,—but he did not tell her what was in the letter nor offer to let her see it. Virginia was present when her mother asked the question, and it seemed to her that Beverly looked a little embarrassed when he spoke of Gordon's letter. She wondered why.

They did not see him for a long time after this. The corn was getting its first plowing when he came again. And this time it was for a flying trip. He and Ike Swamscott had been north of the river recruiting—the Confederacy was in desperate need of men now. They were to start South in the morning, and in the meantime were to spend the night at Mr. Swamscott's. The negroes were still at Keswick, and there seemed, on that account, more danger there than at the Swamscott place, where the negroes were gone

The Trevilians had gone down to see Beverly, taking Sallie Devereau with them, and when Colonel Trevilian said it was time to be getting toward home the girls decided to stay all night, at Mrs. Swamscott's earnest invitation, seconded by Beverly and Ike.

"Stay, Virge," Beverly whispered in Virginia's ear. "There is something I want to tell you." He looked so

strangely agitated that she wondered, with vague alarm, what it could be.

The Trevilians said their good-bys outside, the Swamscotts having sympathetically said theirs within,—Sallie casting in her lot with them. Indeed, it seemed probable that Sallie might be induced to do this for all time. Ike Swamscott was almost as handsome as Beverly in his gray uniform at the beginning of the war, and Sallie knew that the heart beating under it was twice as warm for her as Beverly's had ever been or would ever be. So, as the uniform began to grow ragged, Sallie began to think more of the heart under it. It is hard for a girl to hold out against a love like his,—he had told her once that it had "grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength,"—and when he wrote to her, after one of her periodical refusals, that he still loved her "as tenderly, as infinitely, but as hopelessly as of old," Sallie cried over the letter for a week and gave it up. That plea had touched her heart and made it his. All of which explains why Sallie was not now at the door with the Trevilians.

When his father and mother were gone, Beverly stood with his arm close about Virginia, and she looked up into his face expectantly. There was something there she had never seen before. She shivered a little before it. He had been quiet all the evening,—little like the rollicking Beverly of old,—but now he held her passionately to his heart as if he feared that something might slip in between them that would hold them forever apart.

"What is it, brother?" she asked, an undefined fear knocking at her heart and demanding to come in—a fear that was so much worse because she did not know of what she was afraid. "You have something to tell me?"

"Yes," he said, "I have something to tell you,"—he drew her cheek to his and patted it as one would a child's, —"but, Virge,—'little Birgie,'—"

Her eyes filled. It was her baby name—the one his infant lips had given her. He used it always when he was tenderest of her.

"—it will hurt you, dear,—will hurt you cruelly!"

She closed her eyes and bent her head to the blow. It was Gordon! She thought of the letter that Beverly had had from him. Beverly knew something that he had kept from her because he could not bear to hurt her, and, perhaps, too, from love of his friend.

"I ought to have told you long ago," he said, with stern self-accusation. "I ought not to have let it go on, keeping a cowardly silence. . . . You cannot blame me more than I blame myself!"

She drew herself away from him with a fierce impatience. She had stood all she could.

"What is it?" she cried passionately;—"tell me! I can stand anything—anything, anything—*anything!*—if I can only know!"

He took both her hands and held them tight. "Virginia, before I tell you, let me beg one thing. Don't think too harshly of—poor Lois."

Lois! It was!

"It is always the man," he went on bitterly, "that is the most to—"

"Beverly!" A quick, sharp whisper came from behind them, and a hand touched him. "Come in here! quick!"

They slipped through the half-opened door. It was Mr. Swamscott "The house is surrounded. Go in the sitting-room and take a book or something. There they are now!"

At this moment two Federal soldiers appeared at the front door,—another entered through the room they were vacating. When they met in the sitting-room they saw a family quietly reading, and two farm-hands lounging in the background—their chairs tilted back against the

wall. There was no time for hiding and no chance for flight. Perhaps they did the very best thing, after all.

The men belonged to Jennison's command, and were in search of nothing more than shelter for the night. It was a harmless errand, apparently, but everybody in that room knew that if the identity of the farm-hands was disclosed their lives would not be worth a picayune. In the face of this—perhaps because of it—the visitors were politely received and entertained.

After the first frightful moments were past, they all noticed that Virginia was missing, but the peril was too imminent to risk the introduction of a new element of danger, such as a question might prove.

The explanation of her absence was this:

As the soldier had entered through the side door of the dining-room, Virginia had stepped back into an unlighted corner, and so escaped notice. When he was safely in the other room, she slipped out, and across the porch on which she and Beverly had been standing. A moment later she was flying down the road.

The Swamscott place was but half a mile from Mr. Whalen's. That distance was never traversed in much less time. If she could only get Mr. Whalen, the boys might yet be saved!

Every feeling of Virginia Trevilian's nature, as she sped along the dark road, was held subservient to the pressing need of saving Beverly; every conscious thought, as she galloped back behind Mr. Whalen, was of him; and yet, through it all, reiterating in her subconsciousness was one word, and that a name—

Lois!

If a popular vote had been taken on Grand Prairie as to the guardian angel of the community, it would certainly have been awarded to Mr. Whalen—the good neighbor

who would have died for the Union, and who lived for his friends. Not till the final casting up of accounts will it ever be known how much he did toward the saving of life and property. Was a widow's last cow taken by ruthless hands? Mr. Whalen was never too busy to attempt its rescue. Was a man's life endangered? Mr. Whalen stood ready to swear him off. It must be admitted that his oath was a somewhat facile thing in those days, though men had been wont to say in times past that his word was as good as his bond, and his notes never went to protest.

There were many dark pages in that four years' record, but—

"Darkness shows us worlds of light
We never see by day."

For those whose memories are good, those pages are illumined with kindly deeds and heroic acts that stand out like the exquisite coloring of an old-time missal wrought with painstaking care by some medieval saint.

The neighborhood animosities of the earlier years of the war had passed away in the frightful community of interests and dangers of this later time. Then it was a struggle for opinion; now, it was for life. In those days, men of differing political creeds shunned each other lest friendships be sacrificed; in these, they sought each other's homes for mutual safety. War makes strange bedfellows. In Jackson County, Union men and Southern men forsook their homes and lived together for a protection one to the other. "All that a man hath will he give for his life."

Mr. Whalen had once taken the wife of one of Quantrell's lieutenants and conveyed her and her children to a place of safety in Illinois. She was his neighbor. She had come to him in terror of her life, and he could not

say her nay. "It 's a poor widow woman that wants to get to her friends in the North," he said to the authorities, and they let them through.

"It was n't so far from the truth, either," he said in recounting the incident one day at Keswick. "She 'll be a widow before it 's through!"

"Mr. Whalen," said Mrs. Trevilian at that time, "does n't it hurt your conscience to tell an out-and-out story to save your friends?"

"Not a bit! not a bit!" he replied cheerfully; "unless I get caught at it. Then it hurts me powerfully!" And he threw back his head and laughed heartily.

A moment later he added seriously: "No, Mrs. Trevilian, I feel no more compunctions of conscience in throwing Jennison's men off the scent than any other hounds! They are not fighting for their country! They are here for what 's in it. And that means plunder and pillage. If I can save a friend's life or his property from these red-legged devils by an innocent lie that don't hurt anybody, I 'm going to do it, and take my chances with the good Lord! I think he 'll say, 'Well done, good and faithful.'"

So when Mr. Whalen shuffled into the Swamscott sitting-room, speaking to the family in his homely every-day fashion, nodding carelessly to the two hands, and giving a cordial handshake and a "How are you, gentlemen?" to the soldiers, it will be seen why there was an instantaneous feeling of relief. Mr. Whalen would get them out of it some way.

They talked for an hour, the new visitor rather monopolizing the conversation because he was afraid to trust the family, but taking pains to draw the older one of the soldiers into it. He related stories in which General Ewing and Colonel Jennison and Colonel Anthony's names appeared familiarly—and his own incidentally. He was

known throughout the country as a staunch Union man. The "hands" sat somewhat back in the shadow, and naturally took no active part.

Soon after Mr. Whalen's arrival, Virginia had come in from the back with a plate of apples, which she passed, as a daughter of the house would. Then she took a seat near one of the men. Sallie was seated by another. The soldiers were young, and the girls did their best.

At last Mr. Whalen rose. Virginia thought: "Heavens! is he going without doing anything!"

"Well, boys," he said, "I 'm goin' at that corn in the morning. I want you there by daybreak. You are through with them, I believe you said, Mr. Swamscott?"

At the door he turned. "Come to think of it, I don't know but you 'd better go over with me to-night—Hotel Swamscott seems pretty full just now—how is it, Mrs. Swamscott?"

"I reckon it would help me out a little," she had presence of mind to say. "I have been wondering where I would put them all."

They got up and said good night as farm-hands would.

An hour later they were on swift horses, headed southward.

"Beverly, you *fool!*" said Mr. Whalen, impressively; "don't you let me see your face around here till the war 's over! Now go!"

But Beverly's face was seen again. He could not stay away.

CHAPTER XXVIII

FIGHTINGS WITHOUT AND FEARS WITHIN

VIRGINIA TREVILIAN did not sleep much that night. With the quieting of her active fears, the ones that had been held in check became rampant. What was it Beverly had had to tell her that he knew would hurt her?—"hurt her cruelly" was what he said. . . . It was something about Lois Chandler—that much was certain. Oh, if he could only have finished! Now, it might be months before she would know,—for they seldom knew where Beverly was long enough to write to him.

She went over every word he had said—every look on his face—every tender, caressing motion he had made, as if he would shield her from something that threatened her. . . . What was it? What *could* it be that he blamed himself for not telling her before?

And so the weary hours wore on.

She woke Sallie once with her restlessness.

"What is it, Virge?"

"Nothing. But I can't get to sleep."

"Oh, don't worry about them. They are safe. Have you said the multiplication-table?"

"Yes."

"Well," said Sallie, sleepily, "try the sheep."

"I have;—but they won't stop jumping."

"Then," intermittently,—Sallie was almost off now,—"get up—and bathe your face—and say—and say—your prayers."

And Virginia bathed her face and said her prayers. More than that, she prayed—prayed desperately.

She told nothing at home of what Beverly had said to her. It was nobody's concern but hers, she told herself, and hers it should remain. And as the victim of a mortal disease instinctively guards her secret and hides her pain, so Virginia hid hers and let it eat into her soul.

If she had only told her mother! But she could not. She had never told her mother even of her love. How could she tell her now of the blasting of it? She could only think and think and think, and go to bed to dream of it, and rise up again to think. Such a conflict is hard on a girl. Virginia grew thin and hollow-eyed.

In all her dwelling on this subject, she had never had a thought of anything worse than that Lois, by some charm of face or form, had won her lover away from her. That she should have been able to do this seemed so astounding, that she thought of it all in a kind of dazed bewilderment. It seemed inexplicable that Gordon—of all men—should have fallen under a spell like that! Then she thought of what she had heard some ladies say once about how men often passed by girls of worth and lost their senses over mere physical beauty. . . . And Lois was the most perfectly beautiful girl she had ever seen in her life—she would say that much for her. . . . But Gordon!—a man like Gordon! What could he find in her to attract him, except her face?

She felt strangely humiliated. It seemed monstrous to her that Lois Chandler—a girl for whom she had always felt a sort of condescending pity—should suddenly step to a place beside her as a rival! . . . And when it was all over between herself and him, as of course it would be, would he ever marry Lois—*Lois Chandler?* She said it with scornful emphasis. There came to her just then the recollection of something Miss Nannie had told her years

ago about a conversation that she and Beverly had had once about this very thing. She had forgotten about it entirely—or thought she had. Sometimes things lie dormant in the mind a long time and then wake up as fresh as ever.

But if Gordon had fallen into any such infatuation, it was probably more her fault than his. She had wondered, sometimes, if Lois were not a little vain—she was so pretty. Yes, probably— Then, all at once, Beverly's words came to her with a new, a sinister force. "It is always the man that is the most to—" To what? To blame?—was that what Beverly was going to say? And —to blame for what?

The flitting of a base thought came to her. She clenched her hands and stared about her, feeling stunned.

No!

She put the very suggestion from her with a sick loathing. It seemed to her white innocence like an emanation from the pit.

Girls were not as wise then in the ways of this wicked world as they are in these days, when they know more than the mothers that bore them. The searchlight of newspaper comment and feminine gossip had not then been turned upon virtue and its lamentable lack as a topic of absorbing interest. Virginia and Sallie and the rest had been shielded from much that blights by simple-hearted mothers who said, wisely or unwisely—take your choice between the terms: "Whatsoever things are pure, my child, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, . . . think on *these* things." Perhaps they were wrong. The mother of us all gained insight when she ate of the Tree of Knowledge,—but it blasted Eden!

The suggestion that came to Virginia she spurned as dishonoring to Gordon and to herself. Beverly could

never, never have meant that. Her cheeks flamed that she should have had such a thought.

But a doubt injected into the mind at exactly the right moment is a very persistent thing. Virginia could not stamp the life out of this one, try as she might. She thought about it—telling herself it could not possibly be —until it grew to fill the universe.

One day she and Miss Nannie were sitting together, with no one else around. Virginia sat facing the sun, which hung in the west, a great fiery disk, just above the horizon. She had one eye closed and her finger held close to the other—so close that it shut out all the glory of that western sky.

"Aunt Nan," she said, "did you ever notice that you can let a little thing like the end of your finger come between you and the sun till you can hardly believe that the sun is there?"

"Yes, often. You hold your finger so close to you that you see things out of proportion."

"But the sun is there, just the same, and everybody else can see it; and you could see it—only you have this thing in front of you that shuts out everything else!"

Her voice had an eagerness unusual in those days.

"Exactly," said Miss Nannie. "Things are not really changed by our way of looking at them, but they are changed for us."

"So that sometimes we don't really see them as they are?"

"Sometimes, yes."

She was silent a moment, and then she asked:

"Aunt Nan, do you suppose anything ever gets in front of our mental vision and comes so close to us and looks so black that it shuts out the light in the same way, so that we can't see things as they are?"

"I don't know what you are driving at, Virginia, but

nobody ought ever to see black things and call them white. Right is right and wrong is wrong, and you can't make anything else out of them, no matter how you look. The Bible says: 'Woe unto them that call evil good and put darkness for light.' Does that answer your question?"

"No!" said Virginia, sharply. "It does n't answer it at all—not at all!"

And Miss Nannie was pretty sure, from the emphasis of her denial, that it did.

It was not long after this that Mrs. Trevilian said to Miss Nannie: "Nan, I believe there is something preying on Virginia's mind. Have you noticed how thin she is getting, and how little she eats?"

"Oh, nonsense!" returned Miss Nannie, who *had* noticed it with growing concern, but did not wish to let her sister-in-law know it. "It 's because there is nothing left that 's fit to eat. You can't expect anybody to have a ravenous appetite for corn-bread and rye coffee. It 's your imagination."

"I 'm not very imaginative. Do you suppose it can have anything to do with Gordon? I often wonder how much there is between them."

"I used to think there was a good deal," said Miss Nannie, "or would be sometime. But here, lately, she seems so indifferent when he is spoken of that I hardly know what to think. He writes to her, just the same."

"Yes, but I don't think she writes to him as often. Sometimes I have thought that she really does care for him and is worrying because she feels that we would not approve of it because he is on the Union side. But, dear child!—"

"I don't believe it is that. It is more likely to be some little misunderstanding between them. Those things seem wonderfully big to a girl of Virginia's age, sometimes" Miss Nannie gave the ghost of a sigh. She had

been Virginia's age herself once, and a little misunderstanding had arisen that had blotted out the sun for her. She thought of what Virginia had said the other day. She had been wondering about it ever since. "Suppose you ask her about it, Sister Bettie. Don't let it go on."

Mrs. Trevilian shook her head.

"No, Nan; 'every heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger'—even a mother—'intermeddleth not.'" She felt intuitively that this was not a matter for even her light touch. But her heart ached for the child.

With the thought in her mind that she had suggested to Miss Nannie, she took occasion to speak much with her daughter about Gordon, dwelling upon his gentleness, his consideration for those of low estate, and his perfect truthfulness. "Miss Lavinia used to say when there had been any trouble: 'Wait till Gordon Lay comes. I will get the straight of it then.' She always felt that Gordon was so perfectly trustworthy—so little governed by passion of any kind. It was always principle with Gordon Lay, she used to say."

Virginia listened to it all without reply. It was as when the virtues of the dead are extolled to those that are bereft. If only he were dead—instead of false—she might listen to it all and be comforted!

One day, when they were alone, her mother spoke to her again with kindliest words of Gordon. She wanted to make it clear to Virginia that no differences of political opinion were as anything compared with nobleness of character.

"He is so careful of the reputation of others," she said. "That is a rare trait, my child, a chivalrous trait. You know how he always defended Lois Chandler when people called her bold after that foolish affair of the readings. He was talking about her the last time I saw him,—the time you missed seeing him,—and he spoke so beau-

tifully about her being motherless. It really quite touched me."

Virginia rose with a look of dumb pain in her face that smote her mother's heart.

"Virginia! my child—what is it? tell your mother, and let her help you!"

"It is nothing, mother; nothing at all. I 'm only tired. I think I will lie down a while."

And Mrs. Trevilian felt herself shut out.

Ah! how true it is—and how hard it is—that we who have borne the pangs of maternity, and would brave death if need be, for our children, may not always in the crises of life enter into their holy of holies!

CHAPTER XXIX

THE PERFECT LOVE THAT CASTETH OUT FEAR

AND yet it was through her mother that peace came to Virginia at last.

Things had gone on this way for weeks. Letters came from Gordon, but they were not answered. She felt that she could not write. What could she say? The family always asked affectionately about him when the letters came—more so now than ever, it seemed to her. She had never known before how much they thought of him.

One day Colonel Trevilian said to her (Mrs. Trevilian had been talking with him): "Virginia, there are few such young men as Gordon Lay. Of course, he and I do not think alike on political questions,—but such differences seem less important to me than they once did. I have come to feel that nothing counts much in the choice of a —a friend but honor and integrity. My daughter, if—"

He was going to say more, but the look on her face stopped him.

They had all had a hand in it now but Miss Nannie, and Miss Nannie proposed to have. She did not intend to see Virginia's life wrecked for want of a warning. "I don't know what old maids are for," she said to herself grimly, "if not for lighthouses to warn other people off the rocks!"

So as they sat together one day she said abruptly: "Virginia, I never told you how I happened to be an old maid, did I?"

"No," said Virginia, with interest; "I have often wondered, Aunt Nan."

"Well, I'm going to tell you,"—and she told the story that had been much in her thoughts since her conversation with Mrs. Trevilian—of the misunderstanding and the angry words and the pride that would not give in on one side and the obstinacy that held out on the other—until finally there was a ring returned and letters asked for, and—the thing was over.

"It really is not much of a story, after all," she said, "to tell. But, Virge, it changed life for both of us!"

Virginia's eyes were brimming. It might not be much of a story, but it seemed the tragedy of life to her.

"Aunt Nan," she asked when she could trust herself to speak, "did—did the thing you heard about him affect his—character?"

"Not at all," said Miss Nannie; "that would have made it very different. It was just a case of a girl's pride and a man's obstinacy—as most of them are."

She did not press the application. She had made up her mind to supply the leaven and let it do its own work. And as Virginia tossed on her pillow that night, she thought, "But her case was so different! . . . Oh, if it was only pride!"

They heard from Beverly occasionally down in Arkansas, but he never referred to the matter that he had begun to speak about that night.

One evening Mrs. Trevilian and Miss Nannie sat sewing carpet-rags. It seemed imperative to have another carpet, for the recollection of the Wilton in the parlor had proved too much for Tigerman, and he had come back for it. The pier-glass felt lonely without it; and really, he argued, without the furniture that went with it, the Trevilians did not have as much use for it as he had.

Which was true, in a way, for they had no house-parties now.

At the last moment there was a pressing call from Mrs. Taggart for more rags, and they had dropped everything to supply the demand. Virginia had read to them a while as they worked, but she soon stopped, and sat with the "Harper" before her, and the page never turned.

She could hardly have told of what she was thinking. To the sharp pain of a few weeks ago had succeeded a dull apathy. It seemed to her sometimes that there had never been a time when she had not had this gnawing pain. She was getting used to it, she said to herself a little drearily, as she had heard of women, married women, learning to bear meekly things they could not remedy. She wondered if it were a kind of paralysis of the emotions, and if she would ever feel anything again very much.

She finished a page and then discovered that she did not know one word of what she had read. She turned resolutely then to the beginning and started again. She would not give up to such dallying! She had got half-way through the page, with somewhat better results, when her attention was arrested by Miss Nannie's voice saying, with a bitterness new to it:

"No, I don't! I think God has forgotten there is such a place as Grand Prairie in His universe!"

"Don't say that, Nan," Mrs. Trevilian's soft voice was protesting.

"Well, Sister Bettie, it's enough to make anybody think so! Here we are sewing carpet-rags to cover our bare floors, and that thief, Tigerman, and his gang sitting on our Wiltons and three-plies! We've served God all our lives; and sometimes, when I look around and see how the wicked prosper, I think we've served Him for naught!"

"No, we have n't! We don't serve God for Wilton carpets and mahogany sideboards. . . . That wicked thought of yours, Nan, is no new thing. Solomon knew of it and answered it thousands of years ago. And his answer is just as true to-day as it was then—'Though a sinner do evil an hundred times and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God.'"

Virginia was listening with an intentness that precluded the idea of emotional paralysis as the proper diagnosis of her case. There was something in Miss Nannie's rebellious protest that found an answering chord in her own breast.

"Do you know why he said that, Nan?" her mother asked, a light shining in her eyes that irradiated her humble occupation and seemed hardly of the earth.

"No," said Miss Nannie, unconvinced and rebellious still; "but he would n't have said it if he had lived in this country. I know that!"

"Yes, he would, Nan. The wise man had a firmer foundation for his faith than mere seeming. Appearances might all point to unbelief; circumstances might be against him; but he was resting upon something greater than circumstance and appearance."

Virginia was listening breathlessly now. She knew her mother was talking of spiritual things, but she was applying it to her own gropings in the dark.

"And why was it?" asked Miss Nannie.

"It was because he could say with Paul, 'I *know* in whom I have believed.'"

There was silence then. Miss Nannie could not find it in her heart to answer those reverent words with either jest or scoff. And Virginia—

Virginia sat motionless. Into the darkened chamber of her heart, where her secret was hidden away, there came a

faint glimmer of light. She did not dare to stir, lest it should vanish and she be left in the blackness of darkness again. . . . "He knew in whom he had believed."

She shut her book softly and stepped into the hall. There she took a light shawl and threw it over her head and went out upon the porch, sitting down on the steps between the white pillars where he and she had so often sat. There was no moon, but it was a starlit night, and from all around came the fresh odors of growing things.

Virginia's soul was in a tumult. She did not perceive the budding of life; she did not notice the steadfast stars; only one thought was in her mind, but that was enough. . . . "He knew in whom he had believed." . . . If this was ground for spiritual faith, was it not also ground for human faith—the trust of man in man? In the relief that came to her with the grasping of this plank amidst a sea of doubts, she did not stop to think that *she* was leaning on mortal man,—Paul, on the Infinite One. . . . Paul "*knew* in whom he had believed." And did not she? Had not Gordon Lay's life been an open book to her since she could remember? And had she ever seen in it anything that need be erased as unfit for a woman to look upon? . . . Why,—*why* had she not thought of this before? She had been looking at all the suspicious circumstances that had been thrown around him, and not at all at what she knew best of all—his own open life. That was what she should have looked at, she told herself sharply.

Then remembrance came to her of the witness her father had borne to his good name—his integrity and his honor; of the things her mother had spoken of to her—his truthfulness, his sincerity, his chivalrous care for the reputation of others,—she even forced herself to face what she had said about his plea for Lois, shrinking back a little and her breath coming hard, but holding steadily to her new point of view, as the sheet-anchor that would keep

her from getting adrift again. Yes, doubtless it was this very trait that had led him to seek Lois out and try to do something for her—what, she did not know and did not need to know, but something kind, she was sure. It would be like him to try to help her if she was in trouble.

Then a recollection of Beverly's unfinished sentence almost swept her new-found anchor away in a surging wave of doubt. She hardly dared to go over that again. . . . But she would! She would probe this thing to the bottom now. She would test her faith by every one of those old doubts. And as she went over again that broken utterance of Beverly's, a thought came to her that almost took her breath away. *Beverly had never said one word about Gordon!* It was she that had put that construction on his words! What if Beverly had never thought of such a thing at all! She could have cried aloud for joy.

How she had wronged him! How hard she had been! She had not guarded his reputation as he had cared for poor Lois's. She found her heart growing tender for the girl. She would go and see her and find out what her trouble was and whether she could not help her. . . . Oh, she had been hard—hard! He would never have condemned anybody unheard like that! Aunt Nan had said a woe was pronounced on those who put darkness for light and called evil good, but she knew her Bible well enough to know that there was a woe, too, for those who called good, evil—and light, darkness.

How blind she had been! What if circumstances had seemed against him? She had heard her father tell of a man he had known who was hanged—actually hanged!—on circumstantial evidence, and it had turned out afterward, when it was too late, that he was innocent. She thanked God from the bottom of her heart that she had never made known her doubts to a living soul. And never

would! She had no doubts! She would cast them to the winds and throw herself absolutely upon her trust in him.

And lo! with that resolve her burden was loosed from her shoulders and fell away, and peace filled her soul. In that moment her heart was opened to all the sweet influences of the night;—the budding life around her seemed to throb and pulsate with joy; the soft, south wind came to her with a message of love from him; the stars—the same old stars they had watched together, Orion and the Pleiades—smiled down upon her just as they did then,—perhaps even now he was looking up at them from the tented field and thinking of her. . . . And—yes, they were—the very same that Job, old Job, had looked up to when he fought his fight—who knows how long ago! . . . And in all these ages they had never swerved!

A kind of spiritual exaltation possessed her. She sprang up and stretched her arms out toward them, as if invoking their steadfastness. Her head was thrown back, her eyes shining.

"Gordon!" she cried in an impassioned whisper; "Gordon! though all the *world* should swear you false," —her hands were clenched now,—"I *will* believe you true!"

But alas! alas! when an act of the will is necessary to faith, the foundations are beginning to totter.

CHAPTER XXX

A FEARFUL SCHOOL AND AN APT SCHOLAR

"VIRGINIA! here 's a letter for you."

She took it from her father's hands and went to the summer-house. It was from Gordon, and she liked to read his letters there. As she bent over it now, an expectant smile on her lips, she did not look much like the Virginia of a few months ago. The roses had come back to her cheek and the gladness to her eyes. Mrs. Trevilian thought it was because her mind was relieved about their opposition, but Miss Nannie felt sure it was the leaven of her own little story,—neither guessing the truth.

Her face was certainly full of sunshine now, for the letter said he was coming home. It might be a month or two yet, but—he was coming! he was coming!

The pansies were sending up their sweet breath outside—the pansies he had gathered for her the day before he started off to Kentucky—how long ago it seemed!—and she had told him her deepest wish was to live where something would happen. Well, she had had her wish! she certainly lived where things happened now! How silly girls were! she thought, feeling suddenly very old. He was coming—yes, but there were so many uncertainties in life. She had found that out.

She stepped to the border to gather some pansies. She was peculiarly susceptible to odors, and pansies always took her back to that day. As she stooped over the fragrant bed, a noise at the horse-blocks startled her. She

stepped back into the summer-house and peered through the vines.

Two men on horseback were at the blocks. One of them looked as if he might have been wounded. She had never seen either of them, to her knowledge; but when she looked at the older man (and he was young) one of those vague, intangible sensations of recognition came over her which make us feel sometimes that we *have* lived in a previous state of existence as cats, or rats, or something. It was very absurd, but he made her think of the barbecue.

The two men dismounted, one with difficulty and leaning on the arm of the other as he came up the walk. He sank to the steps as his companion raised the great knocker and gave a rat-a-tat-tat that resounded through the house. While he was waiting for his knock to be answered, the man turned and looked around him. Virginia could see his face plainly without being herself seen. And again that strange sense of recognition swept over her, though she was sure she had never seen the man before.

Then Mrs. Trevilian herself came to the door, and Virginia heard him say without preliminaries, "I want you to take this boy in and care for him. He needs nursing."

The mistress of Keswick looked down at the lad on the step, who was resting his head against the white column. He raised a smooth boyish face to hers, with innocent-looking blue eyes, cheeks flushed with fever, and lips that tried to smile and were too weak.

"He needs his mother," Virginia heard her say. "Bring him in."

She asked no questions and made no remonstrance. A request from an armed man in 1863 was a command, and this one spoke as if he were accustomed to being obeyed.

Perhaps her heart warmed a little to the boy, anyway, thinking of her own.

The man raised the sick boy gently, set him on his feet, and together they guided him in. Virginia took this moment to follow. But almost before they were in, the man was out again, coming upon her face to face. He raised his hat, swept a swift glance around the prairie, and was gone.

Virginia stood looking after him. "I know now I 've seen him," she thought, "but where?"

Mrs. Trevilian was accustomed to being nurse and doctor both for her family. Her experienced eye saw that this boy needed close care.

"He is a very sick boy," she told her husband. "I think I will sit with him myself to-night. I wish he was with his mother!"

Before night he was muttering in delirium, and they sent for Dr. Lay.

"Who is he?" the doctor asked.

"I have n't the least idea," she said.

"One of Quantrell's men, do you think?"

"I don't know. Hardly, I should think,—such a child as he is. But I know this, Doctor,—unless you give him the right medicine and I give him the right nursing, he is going to die. So, whoever he is, we 've got to pull him through."

"I reckon you 're right," he said.

She had lost herself for a moment toward midnight, when the sick boy spoke. She woke with a start. He was leaning on his elbow looking at her.

"Ma!" he whispered hoarsely, "look at my back!"

To humor him, she bent over him and made a feint at examination.

"They raised great welts," he muttered. Then he looked up at her with a flash of steel in his blue eyes.

"Don't you cry, ma! They'll never have a—chance—to—"

The flash faded. He had dropped off to sleep.

Mrs. Trevilian watched him curiously. Who was this boy and what had happened to him? she wondered. Such a child to be armed!

They had hidden his pistols as soon as he came. The jayhawkers were liable to come upon them at any moment and arms would betray him. Otherwise, the boyish face would certainly disarm suspicion.

But the jayhawkers did not come. And Mrs. Trevilian's nursing won the day.

The boy was sitting up one morning about two weeks later, clothed for the first time, and Virginia was sewing near him. He asked about his pistols.

"They are put safely away—ready for you when you go. Where did you get them? You certainly are not a soldier."

The boyish face flushed with pride.

"I am, though! I am one of Quantrell's men."

"You? Why, you are just a boy!"

"A boy's bullet can do as much work as a man's if it is aimed straight! Besides, I'll be sixteen next September."

"Sixteen, even, is entirely too young to be in the army; and you won't be sixteen for months yet." She spoke severely, from the superior age of twenty-one. "What was your mother thinking of to let you go?"

"My mother could n't help it. She was in prison,—she and my little sister—younger than I am—and my stepfather. When she got out I was gone."

"Where is your home?"

"In Clay County, over across the river."

"Well, as soon as you are able to travel, you go right back to your mother," advised Virginia. "The brush is

no place for a boy like you. You ought to be in school for two years yet."

"I 'm not going back home. I 'm going to stick to Quantrell to the end. They 'll never get a chance to beat me through the corn-rows again!"

They had asked him no questions about himself, and he had volunteered no information. But to-day he was in a communicative mood, and Virginia had a girl's curiosity.

"Who beat you through the corn-rows?"

"The militia. They came to our house one day last spring, looking for Quantrell. He had been over on the north side of the river, and they thought ma and pa would know where he was, and they could make them tell. They came out to the corn-field where my stepfather and I were plowing. They took pa and strung him up three times by the neck to make him tell. When they got through he was nearly dead."

"Did he tell?"

"No. He did n't know. He would n't have told if he had known."

"Did they do anything to you?"

The hot blood rose to the boy's face.

"They lashed me up and down the corn-rows, with a rope, till my back was in great welts! Do you call that anything? Then they made me climb a mulberry tree, at the point of their bayonets, to see them string my stepfather up!"

Mrs. Trevilian would have stopped this recital, for her patient's blood was coursing madly through his veins at the recollection of those indignities.

"Did they do anything to your mother?"

"They pointed their guns at her and threatened to shoot her if she did n't tell where Quantrell was."

"And did she?"

"Ma! You don't know her! She said: 'I 'm like Marion's wife—what I know I 'll die knowing!' She 's grit clear through, ma is! . . . Well, they took pa off, and when they got a little way off they fired their guns, and we thought they had killed him. They said they were going to. But they had n't. They just did it to scare us. But they took him to prison, and arrested ma and my little sister and threw them into prison, and then—I went to Quantrell."

He was silent a moment, when he burst forth like the boy he was:

"I 'll soon be able to shoot with the best of them. I 'm not going to stop till I can shoot as well as Quantrell."

"And how well can he shoot?"

"Quantrell? Oh, he pops 'em every time—a clean bullet-hole in the middle of the forehead—and that 's the last of them."

"*What!*" Virginia was looking at him with staring eyes. "Do you mean to tell me that that man is Quantrell?"

"Quantrell 's the man. Did n't you ever hear the story of how he began it?"

"No. Tell it to me." She was as full of excitement now as he had been a moment before.

The boy leaned forward in his eagerness. Quantrell was his leader and hero, and the story was one to captivate the fancy and fire the imagination of a daredevil boy.

"Well, this is the way they told it to me," he said,—"Arch Clements and the rest of them. I never heard Quantrell say anything about it."

Virginia laid down her work to listen.

"Away back yonder in 1856, when Quantrell was a right young man, he and his brother started overland to California. They got as far as Kansas, near Lawrence, when a band of jayhawkers fell on them and killed his

brother, and robbed them, and left Quantrell for dead. But he was n't! I reckon they 've wished a good many times since then that he had been!

" Well, he came to after a while, but he could n't move, and he lay there two days and nights by the dead body of his brother, keeping away the coyotes and the buzzards. At the end of that time an old Indian found him and buried his brother, and took Quantrell home to his wigwam, and nursed him back to life. The boys say those two days and nights made a demon of that man! You would n't know it, though, to look at him. He 's as mild-looking as a preacher."

Virginia thought of the young man she had seen at the barbecue, and what Gordon had told her afterward about the way he looked at Jim Baird.

" Who was it brought you here? " she demanded, with a sudden, fearful enlightenment.

" Quantrell." There was pride in his tone. " I tell you, Quantrell don't go back on his men! "

" Go on with your story," she said.

There came to her, with a rush that was almost overpowering, the feeling she had had about this man's some day coming into their lives. He was in their lives now with a vengeance! If it should get out that they were nursing Quantrell's men—she turned sick at the thought.

" Yes, sir, that night just made a demon of him. He did n't seem to care to live for anything but revenge. While he was getting well in the old Indian's wigwam he laid his plans. He made a vow that every man in that gang should die as his brother had died. And how do you suppose he made sure of them? "

" I don't know. How? " asked Virginia, breathlessly.

" He joined that band of jayhawkers himself. They did n't know him. They had left him for dead, you know; and he had changed his name and everything like that.

Then he got them to talk about those two men they had killed and how they had done it. And he listened, and bided his time. Well, one day a jayhawker in that band was found dead with a hole in the middle of his forehead. Nobody knew who did it. And Quantrell, or Hart as he was called then, did n't know any more than the rest. It was not long before there was another, and after a while another, and a few weeks afterward another—always with the one bullet that had gone home.

"After a while they got frightened and disbanded. It did n't make any difference. Quantrell had them spotted then, and the same shot followed them. The boys say that whenever he kills a man he ties a knot in a silk cord he carries. There were thirty-two of those men. They say there are twenty-three knots now. One of them was for a man killed over here in this county at a barbecue. Quantrell had tracked him here."

"I know," cried Virginia, shuddering. "It was Jim Baird. I was there and heard the shot."

"Jim Baird—that 's the very man. They say there were two of these Bairds. They got scared and left Kansas—came over to Missouri and bought negroes, and tried to pass themselves off for Southern men. But Quantrell found him! He 'll find the other one some day. Well, some time before they disbanded he planned with seven of these jayhawkers to go over to Missouri to old man Walker's and run off his negroes. He sent word to Walker to be ready for them, and Walker gathered in his neighbors; and when they got there—the jayhawkers, I mean—Quantrell suddenly went over to the other side, and they killed the whole gang. That night seven knots were tied in the cord."

"Mercy! is n't that awful!" breathed Virginia.

The boy's eyes had kindled with the recital, his cheeks were glowing, and his breath came fast.

"'Awful!'" he exclaimed. "I think it's glorious! He paid them back, eye for eye, and tooth for tooth!"

He lay back in his chair then, exhausted.

"You've talked enough now," said Virginia, hastily. She had forgotten about his being sick. But there was one thing more she wanted to know.

"You have told me all about Quantrell," she said, smiling, "and about yourself except your name."

"My name is Jesse James," he said.

Jesse James! It has been heard many times since then, to the detriment of the State's good name, but it was no more that day than John Smith. The bandit of later years was a beardless boy, fresh from the corn-field and the plow. He was taking his first lessons in crime.

WHEN Colonel Trevilian heard the story Virginia had to tell he looked grave.

"I am afraid this will bring trouble on us," he said. "If it becomes known that we have harbored a man whom Quantrell himself brought here, there is no telling what it will lead to. . . . No, I know we did n't know it, and could n't have helped it if we had known it; but—my dear, do you think the negroes generally know about this boy's being here?"

"No—none of them, I think, but Mammy and Uncle Reuben and—"

"I 'll answer for Mammy," put in Virginia.

"And we know that Reuben is perfectly trustworthy," Colonel Trevilian asserted. "But we interrupted you, my dear."

"I was going to say," Mrs. Trevilian continued, "that perhaps Emmeline, being in the dining-room, may have suspected something. Still, we have been very careful. I hardly think so."

Colonel Trevilian shook his head. "These are the

times when 'a man's foes shall be they of his own household,'" he said.

"Yes," said Miss Nannie, prophetically, "and when 'a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell of the matter.'"

Well might the Trevilians fear!

CHAPTER XXXI

THE SACK OF KESWICK

"My hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered . . . ; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped." ISA. X. 14.

IT was the twentieth day of August, 1863.

They never forgot that day on Grand Prairie. It was seared into their memories with a red-hot iron. It was the prelude to the carnival of blood at Lawrence. Quantrell's forces were gathering for it now. From fastnesses along the Snai, out of the deep, wooded glens of the Blue, men came in twos and threes, exchanging passwords and pressing on.

A band had gone to Dr. Lay's the night before. He was at the supper-table when they called him out. He went straight to his wife and kissed her good-by. Many a last farewell was taken thus that summer.

"Oh, my husband!" was her moan.

"My dear, be brave! Our times are in God's hands."

Arm in arm they stepped to the door. There was no accusation; there was no form of trial or defense; they simply shot him down with accurate aim that left him dead in her clinging arms—the good doctor who had brought some of them into the world—who had smoothed the way of their fathers and mothers out of it. Forgotten were the hours of patient watching he had given them; forgotten all the weary miles he had plowed through ice and snow to succor them in need; forgotten the roses

he had called back to their children's cheeks, and their gratitude then. He was on the other side, and they were maddened with the taste of blood. Ah! Sherman was right. War *is* hell!

They buried him the next day under the willow at Keswick. He had no family burying-ground of his own, and it was not unusual for that kindly people to offer the hospitality even of a last home to a friend.

The stricken family was taken to Keswick's sheltering roof. All differences were forgotten now. They had been lifelong friends—and he was gone!

Evil tidings fly fast. Hardly had the murdered man been laid to rest before a mob of infuriated soldiers appeared on Grand Prairie. The news of a Union man's death added fuel to a fire already blazing. They were on their way to Keswick. The story of Quantrell and the sick soldier had reached them. Emmeline had been faithless. One of those soldiers pressed on in advance, sparing neither himself nor his horse. It seemed as if his object was to get there before the others.

The little group of mourners had just left the willow and the new-made grave under it, and were sadly wending their way to the house, Colonel Trevilian supporting the wife of his old friend, whose death was so soon to be visited upon him. Only Virginia had lingered to lay flowers on the mound—for the sake of the absent one.

As she rose, her mind filled with thoughts of him and of his loss, Uncle Reuben touched her arm.

"Miss Figinia," he said in a low, guarded tone, "dey 's a man waitin' down hyarnder in de pasture to see you—a soldier."

"A soldier?" repeated Virginia, in amazement. "To see me?"

There came to her a swift remembrance of how she had gone forth on just such a summons to meet Gordon un-

der the honeysuckle. . . . *Suppose* it should be Gordon! Oh, to be clasped in his strong arms again and sob it all out on his breast! She had been through so much! . . . Then she smiled sadly at her own folly. Gordon was in Mississippi.

"Was it a Federal soldier, Uncle Reuben?"

"He 's got on Federal clo'es, honey," was Uncle Reuben's non-committal answer. The time had come when no man could judge righteous judgment from the outward appearance. The old man was fumbling in his pocket.

"He gimme dis hyeah paper to give you, Miss Figinia. I seed him speerin' roun' behint de trees in de pasture when you-all was gwine to de grave, and I went down dar. Yaas'm, he 's waitin' down dar in de bresh."

Virginia took the note with a beating heart. It was written on a scrap of paper torn from a note-book, and was in an unknown hand.

"There is danger," it said, "for somebody you love. If you want to save him, come down to the place that the negro will show you, and *come now.*"

It was unsigned.

Virginia thought rapidly. Who was it that was in danger—her father? He was always in danger—everybody was in danger on Grand Prairie, for that matter. . . . Could it be Gordon, after all? Perhaps he had come back sooner than he had expected and was in the neighborhood even now, and this was somebody that Rene Taggart had sent to warn her. She shuddered at the thought. . . . Or Beverly! They had not seen Beverly for months —they did not even know where he was. . . . Perhaps it was the boy they had nursed—Jesse James—come back to

give them secret information of some new danger from Quantrell's band.

"Was it a young boy, Uncle Reuben?"

"No'm, hit 's a tall man; got beard all over his face. Seem lak I know de favor of dat man, but I can't tell what I 've seed 'im."

A big, bearded man! Who in the world could it be? And what did he want with her? Would she dare to go down in the woods to meet a strange man? Then she reflected that if Uncle Reuben had been told to pilot her, it was not likely that the man meant her any bodily harm. She picked up the paper and read it again. "Danger for somebody you love . . . *come now.*" There was an emphasis on that last part that startled her.

She looked down toward the woods and then around the prairie. The western sky was ablaze with gold, and mounting up against that brilliant background was a faint haze of something that it seemed to her darkened as she looked. Was it smoke?

"Uncle Reuben," she said quietly, "what is that over there in the west?"

The old man shaded his eyes. "Hit look to me lak dust, Miss Figinia. I 'm mighty 'fraid dey 's soldiers kickin' up dat cloud."

She turned toward the woods.

"Go on!" she said sharply. "Show me the way."

When they reached the clump of haw-bushes down in the pasture—the very ones under which Rene had sobbed her heart out that day so long ago—a man got up from a fallen log and stood before her. He was heavily bearded, and his soldier cap was pulled down over his face. He pushed it back and stood looking at her with an insolent smile.

It was Emmons Baird.

He moved a step forward and then stopped, warned by

a look in her eyes. She had drawn herself up to her full height and stood quietly waiting his next move.

"You know me, I see," he said.

"Yes. I know you. What do you want?"

"I want to talk with you. I 've got something to tell you that you ought to know. But I don't want to say it before that old negro. You need n't be afraid."

"I am not afraid," she said, as quietly as if she were in her father's house. "Uncle Reuben, go over there by that big hickory, out of hearing but not out of sight. Watch us closely, and if I motion to you—come. . . . Now—what have you to say to me?"

He was looking at her in bold admiration. One thing that had kept up his strange infatuation for the girl was her utter lack of fear. He had planned this meeting in the woods with the base thought that, alone with him, an armed man, she would feel herself in his power and yield more quickly to his wishes. He had expected to be complete master of the situation. Somewhat to his bewilderment, she was as yet mistress of it. Here she was directing her servant and himself as if the situation had been of her planning.

"What have you to say?" she repeated. "Say it quickly, please, for I must go."

"There is a squad of soldiers on their way to this place," he said, speaking so naturally that she was partially thrown off her guard. Perhaps this was only a kindly warning, after all. "You can probably see them now out there on the Kansas City road. They will be here inside of a half-hour. They are after your father. You know what that means!" She did know—the blood of the last martyr was yet crying from the ground. "I 'll tell you plainly that the plan is to kill him and burn Keswick. They 've heard of this house being a hospital for Quantrell's soldiers."

She was listening with strained attention.

"He was just a boy," she said. "We never knew he belonged to Quantrell till he was going away."

"That won't make any difference. Do you suppose you will get them to believe that? I know those men. I belong to that squad. They mean mischief, I tell you."

Virginia had not stirred. She was as white as a sheet. "You have come to warn me," she said. "What can I do?"

He took a step nearer. His hot breath swept her cheek as he stooped over her.

"You asked me a minute ago what I wanted. I 'll tell you. Virginia Trevilian, I want you! I want you for my wife! Say the word and I 'll send those men back. I 'll tell them I 've looked into it and found we 're wrong. Say the word and not a hair of your father's head shall be harmed. Promise to be my wife when the war 's over and I will swear to you that Keswick shall not be touched —to-day or any other day. *I* can keep them from it if I want to!"

Virginia had stood perfectly still during this strange love-making, if such it could be called. She was almost too astonished at the audacity of the man to try to stop him. She turned upon him now with a dangerous light in her gray eyes. They looked almost black.

"Your wife!" she said, with slow, cutting emphasis. "Why, Emmons Baird, you are mad! stark, raving mad! Do you suppose I would ever marry *you?*" A dull red spread over his dark face at the concentrated scorn of her tone. "And do you suppose my father would save his home at the sacrifice of his daughter's honor?"

"I have n't asked you to sacrifice your honor," he said sullenly. "I want to marry you." She gave a gesture of impatient disgust. "*Some* men I know don't ask that!"

As angry as she was, the significance of the words did not escape her.

"You think I am not good enough for you," he went on,—he could not fail to see that this was final, and, like the reptile he was, he was gathering himself to strike with an envenomed fang,—"because I have n't been off to college, and can't say smooth things like Gordon Lay! Oh, I know who you are saving yourself for! I 'm not blind! But I 'll tell you this, Virginia Trevilian,—with all your pride and your high-mightiness, you don't know everything! I may be what you 'd call a bad man—I don't claim to be a Sunday-school boy,—maybe I 've been a little too free with my gun and rebel cattle, but—listen to this —*I've never yet ruined a woman!* and Gordon Lay—"

She faced him with white lips and blazing eyes.

"It 's a *lie!*" she said vehemently. "A base, wicked *lie!* It 's worthy of you, Emmons Baird!"

He laughed sardonically. "It 's no lie. You 'll see. Ask—Lois Chandler!"

She left him without a word.

When she reached the house an officer and three men on horseback were standing before the door. The fences had long ago been torn down for the convenience of loaded wagons. The horses trampled the pansies ruthlessly. Colonel Trevilian was talking to them, and she went straight to his side.

At a word from the leader one of the men dismounted.

"Get on that horse," commanded the officer to Colonel Trevilian. "I want you to show us the way to John Pasco's."

It was an old subterfuge. Men were led forth thus as sheep to the slaughter. Sometimes they came back and sometimes they were left dangling at the end of a rope. One never knew which it would be, but Virginia had reason to believe it would not be the first.

She caught the man's bridle as he stood there. He was mounted on a magnificent black horse, which reared as he felt the hand on his bit.

"Let go!" commanded the officer.

She did not release her hold. "Not till you tell me my father shall be safe!"

The horse reared and came down and reared again, taking the girl with him.

"Virginia! *child!*" her father cried in an agony of fear. Every man in that yard expected to see her trampled.

"*Let go,* I tell you!" thundered the man. "This horse is a stallion! He 'll paw you to death!"

Her face was white to the lips, but she clung to the bit and lifted a defiant head.

"I won't let go! until you promise me my father shall not be harmed!"

The beast reared again.

"I promise!" cried the man. "Good God! you can't see a woman killed!" He looked at her with fierce admiration.

"We 'll show you the way," said Virginia, gathering up her hair, which had dropped from its fastenings. "I will go behind my father."

When they returned, the yard was full of men. The house had been stripped. Wagons were driving away from the door piled with the last things that Keswick had to give up. The negroes were gathering their belongings together with averted faces, and other wagons were waiting for them. A tiny line of flame was creeping up the wall, and the hand of Emmons Baird held the torch.

"My God!" groaned the Colonel. "This is the last!"

He pleaded for it then. His pride was crushed. Keswick had been to him as a child he had reared. They laughed him to scorn. It was a rebel nest, they said,—

had n't he harbored Quantrell's men? And the women wrung their hands in impotent despair.

The old man turned upon them at last.

"'What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces and grind the faces of the poor? saith the Lord of hosts.'"

His soul was full of the burning words of the Hebrew prophet. They surged within him for utterance.

"We take our orders from Colonel Jennison," said the officer on the black horse. "We have n't anything to do with the Lord of hosts." And the others laughed.

"You will have!" cried the Colonel, in a voice that thrilled with intensity. He shook his finger in the man's face. He was desperate now—it did not matter much what became of him. "'Ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses.' And—'the Lord rideth on a swift cloud!'"

In spite of their bravado, they were startled by his words. They thought of them the next day when the storm broke upon Lawrence.

Once only, as all this was going on, did Emmons Baird speak to Virginia. When the flames leaped from porch to roof and the thick smoke poured from every aperture, he stepped to her side. The wagons were driving off—the negroes were gone—the soldiers were preparing to leave.

"What do you think now of your choice?" he sneered.

"Better than ever!" she said defiantly. "I took you then for a bad man. Now I know you for a fiend incarnate! Women don't mate with monsters!"

And at the moment of his triumph Emmons Baird had the old feeling of defeat.

"I 'm not through yet," he said grimly, and he pointed his revolver at Colonel Trevilian.

She heard the click and raised a face of despair to the officer on the black horse. He had ridden up to have a last word with her. He thought he had earned it.

"Drop that gun, Baird!" he shouted above the roar of the flames. "I 've given my word to the girl, and, by God! I 'll stand by it!"

The pistol dropped. "You 're ahead," said Emmons Baird, menacingly; "but you 'll not always be! I 'll strike you yet!"

THERE was many another burning house that night on Grand Prairie. They started up like beacon fires. By their lurid light grim men, with set faces and the hearts of demons, rode into the west.

When the sun went down, Keswick was a mass of charred timbers, its chimneys and its blackened pillars standing guard over the grave of hope.

Colonel Trevilian went about the yard like one distraught. His home was gone. His people were gone. He had not believed they would leave him, but the love of liberty is as strong as the love of life.

"It is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity," he muttered. "Alas! that I should live to see it!"

Virginia clung to him.

"We will build it again some day, father," she said, with quivering lips,—"when Beverly comes back—"

"Beverly! Where is Beverly? Hunted like a wild beast! Ah, Beverly, my son! my son!"

He strode up and down before the spot where his roof-tree had been. He had borne all bravely until this. But Keswick was the apple of his eye. It was to have been his son's and his son's son's, and—it was gone!

The wind stirred his gray hairs. His head was bared to every blast now. A sudden gust brought a shower of smoldering sparks around them. He stretched out his arms with a gesture of despair.

"'I am poor and sorrowful,'" he said in a broken voice. "'Thou feedest me with the bread of tears.'"

Then his mood changed. He raised his clenched hand to heaven.

"'Let death seize upon them,'" he cried in a harsh, stern voice that made Virginia shrink from him, so little did it seem like his own, "'and let them go quick down into hell!'"

"*Father!*"

He was not to be stopped. The waters of a full cup had been wrung out to him that day.

"'Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not! . . . Let their habitation be desolate! . . . Let their children be continually vagabonds and beg! Let them seek *their* bread also out of the desolate places!' . . . Yea, 'let them be blotted out of the book of the living!'"

"Father! . . . *Father!* . . . come and sit down in the summer-house! See! that is n't burned! Why, here is some of the honeysuckle unscorched."

And so she babbled on, thinking meanwhile in her anguished heart, "*Where* is mother? Why does n't she come!"

She came at last.

"I 've been busy making down beds in the loom-house, dear. I think we are going to be right comfortable, after all, to-night. Mammy saved a few things and Uncle Reuben has been filling a spare tick with straw. It 's fortunate it is summer. Oh, no! Uncle Reuben and Mammy did n't go. . . . We 'll get along! Virginia, help Mammy about the supper, will you, dear? I 'll sit with your father in the summer-house a while—as we used to do."

She drew the gray head to her shoulder. She did not like the strained look about his mouth.

"Mammy," said Virginia, as she washed out some tin cups for the coffee, "have you heard anything about how the Chandlers are getting along in all this frightful time?" She spoke with studied carelessness.

Mammy shut her lips together and turned each slice of

middling before she spoke. "Miss Figinia, dey 's some mighty ugly stories goin' roun' 'bout dat Chan'ler gyurl. Dey ain't fittin' for you to hyeah."

Virginia set the cup down and went outside. She did not ask what the stories were.

Is there anything in life more pathetic than women's efforts to be cheerful with fresh graves and blasted hopes around them? From where she sat at the supper-table, Mrs. Lay could see the weeping willow,—Mrs. Trevilian, the ashes of her home,—but both smiled and kept the conversation going.

When the meal was over Mammy brought out the family Bible, which she had managed to save from the wreck, and Mrs. Trevilian handed it to her husband.

"We will have prayers now, dear, and go to bed. It has been a trying day. Come, Mammy, you and Uncle Reuben—we 'll keep together to-night.

They sat on boxes and broken-backed chairs around the room in Mammy's house that had given them shelter. Virginia and Sallie were on the door-step, and the two old negroes outside the window. Colonel Trevilian took the book—the sacred book that had come down to him from his fathers. In it was the family record of four generations. There was a set, tense look about his face.

"Read the thirty-seventh Psalm, dear, or the fourteenth of John."

He did not heed his wife's words. She was not sure that he heard them. He turned to Job, the nineteenth chapter, and read in a hard, metallic voice:

"Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with His net.

"Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard: I cry aloud, but there is no judgment.

"He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and He hath set darkness in my paths.

"He hath stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head."

He stopped. Every head was bowed. They were weeping silently, but his eyes were dry and burning.

"He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath He removed like a tree.

"He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and He counteth me unto Him as one of His enemies."

Mrs. Trevilian reached out and took his hand. "No, father, no! 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,'" she said softly.

He read straight on.

"His troops come together, and raise up their way against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle.

"He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me.

"My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me."

Mrs. Lay was sitting on the other side of him. She laid her hand gently on his knee, but he did not see it. His voice rose. The bitterness of his tone increased.

"They that dwell in my house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight.

"I called my servant, and he gave me no answer—"

His voice broke then. The defection of his negroes had been a blow to him. He had not believed they would

leave him. It is a fearful thing to see a strong man break down. Sallie looked at him with fascinated eyes, while Virginia was sobbing in Miss Nannie's lap.

He read the words again with an intensity that was painful.

"I called my servant, and he gave me no answer—"

It was more than Uncle Reuben could bear. It did not seem possible to him that this was reading. It was an appeal and a personal reproach. He put his head in the window, his black face working convulsively, and the tears running down his cheeks.

"When 'd you call me, marster? I ain't hyeahed you."

Colonel Trevilian closed the book. Then he spread out his hands and looked around with a pitiful gesture of supplication.

"Have pity upon me,—have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me."

His hands fell at his side and his head upon his breast.

For a quarter of a century his "Let us pray" had followed the reading of the Scriptures. They waited for it now, but it did not come. Not once in that quarter of a century had Mrs. Trevilian ever taken the reins of family worship into her own hands. But to-day, as they fell from her husband's nerveless grasp, she gathered them up.

"Uncle Reuben," she said, "lead us in prayer."

They knelt together on the puncheon floor—a stricken band—and the old man poured out his soul before God.

CHAPTER XXXII

ORDER NO. II

INTO the west rode Quantrell's band,—desperate men all,—past smoking ruins and blackened fields, over the border into the enemy's land. Through the hush of the summer evening that should have spoken God's peace to their souls, in stillness of night, 'neath stars that said, if only they had listened, "God reigns—be still!" into the dawn, the rosy, peaceful dawn, they rode.

Lawrence was the acknowledged seat of anti-slavery influence. Its intelligence directed the free-State movement. There had been war to the knife between this town and the border in 1856. Marauding bands from Kansas had been credited, rightly or wrongly, to Lawrence. Stolen property had been sold at auction on its streets. Men seeking to recover that property had been shot down within its borders for their temerity. For these reasons it had become an object of special animosity to the long-suffering border, and passion is not discriminating.

By a strange fatality Lawrence had been disarmed ten days before.

They fell upon the doomed city in the early morning. When they left it one hundred and eighty men lay weltering in blood.

"Jennison has laid waste our borders," they said. "He has ravaged our homes and murdered our kindred. We have come for revenge,—and we have got it!"

A cry of horror went up from the land at that day's

bloody work, and the border shook with fear. They knew retribution would come, and that they would be in its track.

Five days later Colonel Trevilian was on his way to Lexington. A few cattle had escaped the general round-up, and he hoped to get them to Illinois. The old horse he rode was one that had been left by the soldiers as worn-out. His own were all gone.

He had hesitated about taking this trip. There was danger to himself in going, and danger to the cattle in staying. Virginia insisted upon accompanying him as far as Lexington. They would "ride and tie," she said,—she would be all right. Mr. Merriweather would see that she got home. Women were the protectors in those days; for, bad as both sides were, they rarely ever harmed a woman.

They had started and got as far as the first cross-roads. On the sign-post was a fresh-looking printed paper. Colonel Trevilian rode up to it. It was headed "General Orders No. 11."

As he read it a groan broke from him.

"What is it, father?" From Virginia's seat behind him she could not see, but she knew it had struck him hard, whatever it was.

He read it aloud:

"Headquarters District of the Border,
"Kansas City, Mo., August 25, 1863.

"*First*—All persons living in Cass, Jackson, and Bates Counties, Missouri, and in that part of Vernon included in this district, except those living within one mile of the limits of Independence, Hickman's Mills, Pleasant Hill, and Harrisonville, and except those in that part of Kaw township, Jackson County, north of Brush Creek and west of the Big Blue, embracing Kansas City and Westport,

are hereby ordered to remove from their present places of residence within fifteen days from the date hereof.

"Those who, within that time, establish their loyalty to the satisfaction of the commanding officer of the military station nearest their present places of residence, will receive from him certificates stating the fact of their loyalty and the names of the witnesses by whom it can be shown. All who receive such certificates will be permitted to remove to any military station in this district, or to any part of the State of Kansas,—"

"Kansas!" interrupted Virginia, scornfully.

"—except the counties on the eastern borders of the State. All others shall remove out of this district.

"Officers commanding companies and detachments serving in the counties named, will see that this paragraph is promptly obeyed.

"*Second*—All grain or hay in the field, or under shelter, in the district from which the inhabitants are required to move within reach of military stations, after the 9th day of September next, will be taken to such stations and turned over to the proper officers there; and report of the amount so turned over made to the district headquarters, specifying the names of all loyal owners and the amount of such produce taken from them. All grain and hay found in such district after the 9th day of September next, not convenient to such stations, will be destroyed."

The order was signed:

"H. HANNAHS, *Adjutant.*

"By order of Brigadier-General Ewing."

The cattle were browsing by the roadside.

"We will go back, honey," Colonel Trevilian said, in a

dead tone. And Virginia, who had been riding behind him on the worn-out army horse, now resting one hand in his pocket to steady herself, now balancing without holding on at all, put her arms around his waist. His voice sounded as it did the night Keswick was burned,—as if something within him had broken.

The next two weeks were long remembered in Jackson County, and Cass, and Bates,—as Gabriel and Evangeline remembered Acadia, as the "reconcentrados" remembered their herding in the Cuban camps, as the Filipinos remember the time when Samar was made a "howling wilderness."

The mandate spared none. All must go. How, it did not say. There was no transportation provided for them. They had no means of providing it for themselves. The horses and mules were in Kansas. The wagons and carriages were with them. Only those too worthless to take had been left.

Strange teams went out from those counties in the next fortnight,—counties that had boasted of their thoroughbreds and stock-farms,—a broken-down mule and an ox hitched together, or a cow sometimes when the ox was not to be had, or a pair of yearling calves yoked in front of an improvised cart. Anything that had wheels was at a premium. Women went out trundling a wheelbarrow with their children's clothes in it,—such as were not already on the little jayhawkers. Grandmothers rode horseback, with a baby in arms and two behind them, while the mothers walked and drove the cow that was to supply them with food until they reached succor.

Fortunately, there was not much left to transport. A few quilts for a roadside bed, a skillet and a coffee-pot, a side of meat, and a bag of corn-meal, with such few garments as had not been "confiscated,"—these made up the bill of lading in most cases.

As the days went by the roads were filled with the wretched exiles, going they knew not where. Barefooted women and children, stripped of all but a scant covering for their bodies, struggled on through the dust and heat of an August sun. Behind them were their smoking homes; before them, the world that was so big!

They fell by the wayside sometimes and were picked up by pitiful ones who walked that tired children might ride. A great heart of sympathy throbbed through it all, and the fellow-feeling that makes us wondrous kind.

The story of the little sacrifices made, of the cheerful deceptions that did not deceive, of the patient bearing of one another's burdens, of the "lips that smiled when hearts were like lead," of the tears forced back when another was looking,—that story will make beautiful reading some day when the scroll is opened.

The Trevilians had nothing but an old cart left. They put to it two yearling calves. It was a moderately uncertain team, but they were thankful enough to get it. In this rode Mrs. Lay, Mrs. Trevilian, and Miss Nannie. Virginia and Sallie walked with Colonel Trevilian behind the cow, and Mrs. Devereau rode a broken-down horse.

They had been relieved of the care of the cattle by the soldiers who came to execute the order. Naturally, people going out in wheelbarrows and superannuated carts could not transport much furniture. But it was taken care of, as the wagon-trains with their freight of household goods, moving westward, attested. Where life is extinct evil birds congregate. They were not lacking when life went out of those homes.

Men were shot down sometimes in the very act of obeying the order of exile, and their wagons and effects seized by their murderers. Then there would be a hurried

burial, a hasty gathering up of the little that was left, and a frantic pressing on.

"Officers will see that this order is promptly obeyed," said the order. They did.

When it came to the test, Mammy declined to go.

"Miss Bettie, how you know but Marse Beverly gwineter come back hyeah some day? No'm. I 'm gwineter stay right hyeah. Dey ain't nothin' lef' fur de jayhawkers to git, an' I don't reckon dey gwine take off me an' de ole man."

From this decision she was not to be moved. She was something like a cat about locality.

In thinking it over, it really seemed the best thing to do. They knew not what was before them. There would be two less mouths to fill, in any event.

"You may do as you wish," said Colonel Trevilian. "You are free now."

"Humph!" grunted Mammy; "I ain't studyin' 'bout freedom. 'T is Marse Beverly I 'm thinkin' 'bout. Dat chile sho' to be hyeah toreckly."

Miss Tiny went out on horseback, Miss Tony riding behind her. On the horn of the saddle hung an old carpet-bag that held their earthly possessions. Across Miss Tiny's lap was the sword. General James Bascom had written to them for it at the beginning of the war. They had replied in a brief note written in the third person.

"The Misses Bascom," it said, "acknowledge the receipt of General Bascom's letter asking that his sword be sent to him. They beg, however, that they may be allowed to retain it as a cherished memento of a brother who is dead."

The two ladies followed close behind the Trevilian

Leaving the old home

cart, and Miss Nannie and the girls got a good deal of amusement out of them before they reached Lexington.

Mammy and Uncle Reuben went to the "big gate" to see them off. The road was filled with forlorn little companies; bands of soldiers harried them out of the land; there was a pillar of cloud behind them, a pillar of fire on every hand.

But alas! there was no Moses to lead them forth.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A "DARK-SKINNED WHITE LADY"

MAMMY was down in the pasture looking for the old "Dominecker." Having in the last two years been corraled and fastened for safe-keeping to every piece of underbrush in the pasture, the rooster had adopted that umbrageous retreat as his permanent abode, and was giving Mammy no end of trouble to keep up with him.

The supply of live-stock was now so meager that she cherished the "Dominecker." He and his small harem and one failing cow made up the list, if we except a superannuated mule that had been turned out on the prairie to die by some passing teamster when he had procured a worthy substitute.

It was nearly a week after the hejira. The limit was up. A few belated ones still straggled along the "big road," but the greater part of them were gathered now on the river banks in Jackson and Lafayette, awaiting transportation to any point that promised a haven, to any friend who could give possible succor.

The burning of the crops was over. The land was laid waste and brought to silence. Gladness was taken away, and joy out of the plentiful field.

Only a few had dared remain. Old man Chandler sullenly defied the law. He had done nothing, he said, that he should be driven from his home. He had been loyal from first to last. His friends were all in New England; he could not reach them. If he went into a military post

he would starve. All he had in the world was here, and here he proposed to stay. Old Mr. Collins was another who was going to try it.

Mammy had heard shots in the night. She had not thought anything of it, for roving bands of bushwhackers with jayhawkers in nominal pursuit still roamed across the country. A man of Quantrell's dashing methods cared little for the depopulation of a strip of thirty miles, and there had never been anything like a determined effort to drive him out. Had there been, by the silent man who proposed to "fight it out on this line if it takes all summer," or one like him, it would have been accomplished. Nobody supposes that it would have been impossible to exterminate two or three hundred men had there been a strong purpose to do it.

But—"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life," remarked Paul to Timothy many years ago. The good soldiers from Kansas had entangled themselves with the impedimenta of pillage, and always it was the old plea made two thousand years ago, "And behold, . . . as thy servant was busy here and there, he [the man] was gone."

"Chick—chick—chick-e-e! Chick—chick—chick-e-e!"

Mammy had a pan of meal and was trying to tempt her family from retirement. But the "Dominecker" had a wisdom born of stormy times. For many of his kind that call had meant decapitation. He would wait and see whether it was peace or war.

On one side of the cow-path was a thicket of hawbushes. Mammy pushed the bushes aside.

"I lay dat ole fool "Dominecker" is hidin' roun' hyeah somewhar. Look lak even de fowls don't know who to trus'."

She parted the bushes and peered in. The pan of meal fell from her grasp. In a pool of blood lay the body of a

man. His hat had fallen over his face, but there was something strangely familiar about the tall form.

"Hit can't be!" muttered Mammy. "Dem 's soldier clo'es."

She raised the hat cautiously. A fair young face looked up at her with unseeing eyes.

It was Beverly.

He was so white and ghastly that she thought surely he was dead. The next minute, she tore open his coat and put her ear to his heart. It was beating feebly.

Uncle Reuben was roused by a clarion-call as he sat dozing before the cabin door. There was no need of secrecy. They were alone on the great prairie. They held a hurried consultation. Out in the lot, where it had been since last winter, was an old sled used for hauling wood. Of course it had not been put under cover,—that was not the custom of the country,—and in that way it had escaped the destruction that had fallen upon the stable. The mule was hastily hitched to the sled, Mammy's feather-bed (the only one left) put on it, and on this improvised stretcher the wounded boy was tenderly placed. He was carried to Mammy's house and laid on Mammy's bed, and through the night watches her faithful hands ministered to him.

When Beverly Trevilian came to himself the next day, Mammy's black face was bending over him. To the wounded boy, sore pressed and spent, it was like a glimpse of heaven.

"Mammy!"

"Yes, honey, Mammy 's hyeah." It was what she used to say to him in his babyhood when he woke and cried with fright. He closed his eyes and lay still, fearing to move lest he should wake and find himself again in the brush. His thoughts were confused. He could not remember how he got here, or—or—he gave a sigh—he was too weak to think—after a while—perhaps—

Just then Uncle Reuben, who had been gone all morning to Mammy's wonderment and somewhat to her indignation, appeared in the doorway. His wife could see from his face that something had happened. She shook her finger warningly and hurried toward him.

"What is it?" she whispered, supposing it was nothing less than another visitation of jayhawkers.

But it was not a threatened danger this time to her or her charge.

"Dilsey! de jayhawkers done shot ole man Chan'ler!"

"De jayhawkers! Why, he 's Union, ain't he?"

In her excitement, she raised her voice beyond the safety pitch, and the sick man caught the sound. "What dey wanter shoot him fur?"

"Dey say he 's been harborin' secesh."

"Ole man Chan'ler! I never hyeahed of 'im harborin' anything befo'! Who was it?"

"Dey say some young man been consortin' dar, an' de Fed'rals dey got wind of it an' lit down on 'im dis mornin', an' dat was de las' of 'im!"

"You don't mean dey kilt him?"

"Dey shot him down lak a dog! I got dar jes' as dey done it."

Mammy cast an anxious glance toward the bed. Her patient lay perfectly still.

"Whar 's de gyurl?"

"Settin' dar by her paw's dead body! Dilsey, dat gyurl ain't shed a tear! Dey 's a mighty cur'ous look in her eyes. Look to me lak—"

"*Mammy!*"

They started. Beverly had raised himself on his elbow and was staring at them with horror-stricken eyes. He had caught snatches of what they were saying. "What is it? Tell me! *Tell me,* I say!" as they hesitated.

"Go on," said Mammy to the old man; "de mischief 's done did now!"

And Uncle Reuben told the tale.

When he had finished, Beverly Trevilian sank back with a groan.

"For harboring rebels! And he would n't give the name! My God! My God!"

The old negroes looked at him wonderingly. Death in every form was so common in those days that they had become habituated to it. They could not understand his excitement.

"Uncle Reuben!" He was on his elbow again and his voice had the old Trevilian ring of command. "Take the mule and bring Lois Chandler here. Tell her I sent you. Make haste! There 's no time to lose! Tell her I will see that her father has proper burial, and then you attend to it. Go on!"

Uncle Reuben looked at Mammy. He was not quite sure that his young master was in his right mind, and Mammy always solved his doubts. The old woman was looking at Beverly with professional eyes now. She hardly knew herself whether this was sympathy or delirium.

"Go on!" he cried. "Don't stand there gaping at me!"

Mammy came close to the bed.

"Marse Beverly, dis ain't no place fur dat young gyurl right now." She spoke respectfully but firmly. "I reckon Reuben better take her over to ole Mr. Collins's. Dey won't turn her off."

"No! No!" he said vehemently. "She 's coming here. There is no other place for her. This is her rightful place. Uncle Reuben, tell her I said so. She must come!"

There was a rebellion in Mammy's face that had never been there before in all the years she had served this family.

"Marse Beverly!" She spoke sullenly, with a look of suspicious resentment in her countenance. "What is dat white 'oman to you dat you boun' to have her hyeah whether or no?"

Her look was a revelation to Beverly Trevilian. It showed him the depth of the shame and contumely his folly had prepared for the innocent.

"What is she to me?" he said wildly. "Mammy, she is my wife!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE CERTIFICATE

FOR answer Mammy wet a towel and laid it on Beverly's hot forehead.

"Dat chile 's out of his haid," she remarked under her breath to Uncle Reuben.

Beverly tore the towel off and threw it from him.

"I am not out of my head, I tell you!" he said. "You treat me as if I were a child, Mammy! Lois Chandler is my wife—*my wife!* We were married last winter, before I went South. It 's true, I tell you!"

His vehemence was carrying conviction to their minds, but Mammy would not accept it meekly. Her whole soul rose in rebellion at this ignoble alliance for a Trevilian.

"In God's name, Marse Beverly, what did you do it fur?"

"Mammy, I loved her. I felt afraid I might not get back, and I could not go away without feeling that she would have the protection of my name if anything happened to me. I meant it right—God knows I meant it right! but—I 'm afraid I did wrong. Go and get her!" he cried feverishly. "Bring her to me! Poor child!—homeless and fatherless, and—oh, Mammy! take her to your heart! She needs you!"

"Go 'long!" said Mammy to Uncle Reuben, the tears rolling down her cheeks. "Bring all 'er traps. Tell 'er Mammy 's got a place fur 'er." ("De Lord knows whar it 'll be!" she added to herself.)

When the old man was gone and Beverly quieted down,

Mammy went to the bed. She had been doing some pretty logical thinking for one not acquainted with the syllogism. The honor of the family demanded that this marriage be substantiated.

"Marse Beverly," she said, changing the cloth on his head, "is you got any paper to show you an' dat gyurl was married?"

"Yes." He looked up eagerly. "I came up here all the way from Arkansas to get it. I did n't think of it at first—we did n't, either of us—it was all so hurried; but when I got to thinking about it down there—and specially lately—I knew we ought to have it, and so I came back. Mammy, I was going to tell father and mother all about it,—but you know how that went. I was too late."

"Yaas, honey," said Mammy, soothingly; "I know. An' 'bout de paper—" She was afraid he would lapse into sleep or unconsciousness before she found out.

"I went down to old Mr. Marvin's for it last night,—he was the one that married us,—and I was bringing it to show to you and tell you about it. I thought, if anything happened to Lois or to me, it would be better for you to know about it, and you could tell mother what I said. And then the man shot me—and—I did n't know anything more till I came—to—"

"An' whar did you put it, honey?"

Beverly did not answer. He had dropped off to sleep from very weakness. Mammy gave him a little shake. She did not dare to wait.

"Whar did you put it, Marse Beverly?"

"Put what? Oh—yes—the paper. It 's in my pocket—my breast—" He had dropped off again.

When she was sure he was asleep, Mammy tiptoed to where his clothes lay. She searched the breast-pocket and every other pocket; turning them inside out and shaking the garments.

The paper was gone.

Had it ever been there? This was the question that raised its head again and again as she watched her charge. Had he ever had the paper, or was this flightiness? And if he had had it, would other people believe it? Suppose— Why would anybody want to take a paper like that? His watch was gone, and his pocket-book. It was easy enough to understand that; but a paper—

Beverly moved restlessly. His wound hurt him and his fever was beginning to rise. He opened his eyes as Mammy wet the cloth.

"Did you find it?" he panted.

"Yaas, honey," Mammy said, without hesitation; "I found it. Hit 's put away safe under my baid. Go to sleep."

While this search was going on at the cabin, Lois was receiving her husband's summons and preparing to obey. Uncle Reuben had told her but a modicum of the truth in regard to Beverly. He had been hurt and she was to come to him—that was all, except the kindly assurances sent by Mammy and the additional ones prompted by his own gentle old heart.

And so, on a mule guided by the old negro, Beverly Trevilian's young wife was brought home to Keswick, Uncle Reuben shaking his head and thinking mournfully meanwhile of that other day when he had driven Marse William and Miss Bettie in state to the Keswick in old Albemarle. It was a sad enough home-coming—from the house of the dead to the house of the dying—anybody could see that; but they were together at last, and there was nobody to dispute her right, and Youth forgets Fear when it has Love.

The day after she came, Mammy drew her into the other room. Did she know anything about the paper? Not a thing, Lois said. Beverly had said he was going

down to Mr. Marvin's to get it and then was coming back to the house, but she had waited and waited and he did n't come. It was the next morning that the soldiers came and called her father out, and—she shuddered and crept close to Mammy.

She did not seem at all disturbed at the failure to find the certificate.

"I don't see what difference it makes, anyway," she said. "We know we were married all right—by a preacher—of course it was n't the Presbyterian preacher, but that would n't make any difference, would it?" Mammy hardly knew, but thought not. "And there were two witnesses."

"Who was dey?" Mammy caught at a straw.

"Why, there was father and— You see," she broke off, "I told father all about it. I promised Gordon Lay I would the night he came down to see me and I was afraid to take him in the house for fear father would hear us, and we stood out by the big lilac bush and talked."

"How come Marse Gordon to go down dar?" demanded Mammy.

"Why, he had had a letter from Beverly, he said, telling him all about our being engaged and asking him if he did n't think—everything being so uncertain, and all that—that the best thing would be for us to be married when he came back the next time. Beverly had told me once that if we ever should be married secretly he thought it would be better to tell Gordon, or somebody like that that could be trusted, all about it beforehand. I 'm sure I don't know why, if father knew about it—but that 's what he said."

"Humph!" said Mammy. At that moment she could hardly forgive old man Chandler, even in his grave. "An' what did Marse Gordon say?"

Lois gave a half-pout. "Why, he came straight down

there that night as soon as he got home, and tried to persuade me never, never to do it (those were his very words), even if Beverly did want me to. He said it would be a great wrong to both of us to be married secretly,—but I don't think so at all, if we loved each other,—and I would n't promise, because Beverly can just make me do *anything,* and I knew I would n't hold out if he talked to me the way he does sometimes." Mammy could understand. Beverly could always wheedle her out of her eyes. She looked at Lois with more sympathy after this, and a better understanding of the situation.

"And then Gordon said, anyway, I must never do anything without telling father—and I did n't! I told father all about it, and he went down to Mr. Marvin's with us. So it 's all right—now!"

Lois was almost in tears, for there was marked disapproval in Mammy's looks.

"When *was* dat Marse Gordon was down dar?"

"Oh, it was long before we were married," Lois said. She was glad to tell about it. Her feelings had been so pent up that it was a relief to tell. There would have been no stopping the flow now. And Mammy did not want to stop it. She wanted to know. "It was the very night before the bushwhackers got after him, and Rene Taggart got him off,—Beverly told me all about that,—and we were not married till nearly the next Christmas. I had on my—"

"Who was de other witness?" interrupted Mammy.

"It was Mrs. Marvin. Mr. Marvin said we would have to have two—and we did. So you *see* it 's all right. That was just the week before she died. I know she was buried on Christmas day."

"And a heap she had to be thankful fur when she was!" groaned Mammy. It seemed to her just then that life, with its complications, was a good deal less desirable

than a safe sleep like Mrs. Marvin's. But the childish recital she had listened to, and the ignorance of the world it displayed, filled her with a sudden tenderness for the girl.

"Go on an' lay down, honey, while he 's asleep. Res' all you kin."

The next day Mammy left Beverly with Uncle Reuben and Lois, and trudged down to Mr. Marvin's. She did not tell them where she was going—it might all be futile; but—"Hit 's de onlies' chance dey is now to git dat stiff-kit," she said to herself. "Of co'se I can't git dat same one, but I reckon Mr. Marvin would give me another." She was growing hourly more anxious to secure it, for Beverly was not doing well.

By the road, Mr. Marvin's was some distance from Keswick, but Mammy knew a short cut and took it.

There were no signs of life about the place when she got there. She knocked, and only the echoes answered. She knocked again and a hungry cat miaued at her feet —miaued ravenously. Then she opened the door and went in, and finding no one there, pushed on to the kitchen.

An astonishing sight met her eyes. There, an "hour by sun," as she would have said, the Marvin dishes were unwashed. A tallow candle on the table had burned to the socket and gone out. Through the open door she could see an unmade bed. There was evidence on every hand of a hasty departure. And, in truth, there had been. When the order came, Mr. Marvin, the one preacher left in the neighborhood, had declared that, like Mr. Collins, he was going to stick it out, but the tragedy at old man Chandler's was too much for him. He had fled.

Having satisfied herself that the occupant of the house was really gone, Mammy began to experience a feeling of awe. It was like being in the house of the dead. She

edged toward the door of the front room that she had passed through. It was so big and so empty. If she had been a Catholic she would have crossed herself. As it was, she talked to the cat.

With her hand on the door-knob and her foot on the step, she drew an easier breath and looked around. On the table lay the old leather-back Bible, the covers sewed to the back with flax thread. It was the sum total of Mr. Marvin's theological library. Beside it was his ink-horn and quill pen. A split-bottomed chair was pushed back from the table, and there was another on the other side. This was probably where they sat, only night before last, when the old man wrote the certificate she was so anxious to get. Then her eyes fell upon something on the floor that made her forget her fears.

It was a folded paper.

Mammy spread it out on the table and scrutinized every letter. Then she held it off and viewed it at long range. She would have given ten years of her life to have been able to read it. But when she had looked it up and down, right side and wrong side, from near and from far, she announced her conviction. "Yaassir! dat look to me for all de world like a stiffkit!" It was a clear case of mind-reading, for Mammy had never seen a "stiffkit."

Beverly was resting easier when she got home, and she prepared the frugal supper with brightening spirits. Lois tiptoed out to see her. The girl had been so much alone in all these months that she was glad of the old woman's strength to lean upon; and with the proof of the marriage in her pocket and the pathetic child-face before her, Mammy felt the upraised barriers of her heart giving way.

"Honey," she said, taking up the thick corn-meal batter and tossing it from one hand to the other till it was the desired oval, "what do a stiffkit look lak?"

"A stiff what?" asked Lois. She had been watching the operation with fascinated eyes and was thinking of the consistency of batter.

"A stiffkit. De paper you git dat shows you 're married."

"Oh-h, you mean a certificate."

"Dat 's what I said. Do you know what dat look lak?"

"I never saw one," said Lois, thoughtfully; "but I suppose it 's a paper saying that two people are married, and telling when, and signed with the preacher's name. Oh, yes; there would be the names of the witnesses, too."

"Would dey be sorter off to deyse'ves?"

"Maybe so. I don't know. Why?"

"Oh, nothin'. I was jes' stud'in' 'bout it."

Mammy set the oven into which she had put her oval pones on the hearth, raked the coals under and around it, and covered the lid with hot embers. She did it skilfully, but the work was mechanical. Her thoughts were on legal documents. "Dat 's a stiffkit, sho'," she thought. But when Lois was eating her supper, Mammy went out behind the cabin and drew the paper from her capacious pocket, examining it with anxious face.

"Here 's de writin'," she enumerated; "an' de preacher's name, I reckon; an' off hyeah to deyse'ves is de yether two names. I reckon dey ain' no doubt 'bout its bein' de stiffkit."

She had made up her mind on the way home not to give it to Lois, nor to say anything about it to anybody but Uncle Reuben. "Marse Beverly his mind is at res', anyway," she thought; "an' Miss Lois is sech a chile she jes' as apt to lose it as any other way. She ain' got no 'sponsibility 'bout de importance of dat paper! She think ef Marse Beverly say dey married de whole world 'bleeged to believe it! No, sir! I ain' gwine take no chances. I gwine put dat paper whar it 's safe."

And before she retired she had placed it in the middle of her bed, between the straw tick and the feathers.

"Miss Lois," she said the next morning, "is you ever told anybody 'bout you an' Marse Beverly bein' married?"

"Not a soul. Mollie Driscoll asked me one day if I ever saw Beverly nowadays, and I told her no,—that I sometimes saw Gordon Lay when he came down there to see father, but I never saw Beverly."

"Humph! an' did Marse Gordon ever go down dar to see yo' paw?"

"No, but I told her that so that if she ever heard of any man being around there she would think it was Gordon. I was n't going to get Beverly into trouble."

"You don't reckon it would git Marse Gordon in trouble, do you?"

"Why, of course not," said Lois, in surprise. "Gordon is a Federal. It would n't be strange for him to come to see father. But Beverly,—anybody would know that Beverly was there to see me."

"Did you ever tell anybody else 'bout Marse Gordon goin' down to yo'-all's house?"

Lois looked distressed. Mammy's tone intimated that she had done wrong, and Lois was not feeling well and could not bear blame.

"I—I think I told Emmons Baird," she stammered. "He came down to our house to see father last winter, and he asked me if I ever saw anything of Gordon Lay, and I told him yes, I saw him whenever he came down. There could n't be any harm in that because it was *so*. He had n't been down but twice, and I saw him both times. Emmons Baird said he saw us that time we were talking down in the woods. . . . Goodness! I hope he did n't see me when I got to crying! I look just awful when I cry!"

"What was you cryin' about?" asked Mammy. She was thinking, "A-ha! dat 's de time Reuben seed 'em!"

"Why, I had been up to Dr. Lay's for medicine, and when I started home Gordon walked part of the way with me—as far as he dared; and he was talking with me about this very thing and trying to persuade me to give it all up till Beverly came home to stay (you see, he did n't know we were married then, but he had had a letter from Beverly about something), and I told him it was too late. And then I was so frightened at what I had said that I got to crying. But Gordon was real nice to me, only he kept begging me to let him go over and tell Colonel Trevilian all about it—our being engaged, I mean. But I would n't do it—and he just *begged* me, too. He said he had a good mind to tell, anyway. I think it would have been awfully dishonorable in him if he had—when he had promised Beverly not to. Don't you?"

"Humph!" said Mammy. "Hit would 'a' been mighty sensible."

"It would have been dishonorable," persisted Lois. "I told him so. It was n't *his* secret. It was ours."

"Some things is eve'ybody's secret," said Mammy.

"Well, this was n't. Nobody knew anything about it but just ourselves and father and Mr. and Mrs. Marvin,"—("Yaas, an' two of 'em dead an' t'other one runned away!" thought Mammy),—"and Beverly made them promise faithfully not to tell it. We just wanted it to be a sweet little secret between ourselves. We—"

"Go 'long out hyarnder in de yard!" ordered Mammy, with a wave toward the door—adding, as Lois looked at her in grieved astonishment, "an' git some fresh a'r."

She stood, with arms on her hips, a picture of exasperation, looking after her as she went.

"Look to me sometimes lak she ain't got de sense of a ten-year-ole chile! 'A sweet little secret!' Humph!"

CHAPTER XXXV

THE HEIR COMES TO HIS OWN

AS the days went by, the fight for Beverly's life grew fiercer. Mammy watched him jealously, and Lois forgot how to smile in her anxiety.

But the odds were against them. Mammy's skill, renowned in measles and other infantile complaints through which she had successfully carried Beverly, was powerless before such tasks as probing for balls, dressing wounds, and warding off blood-poisoning. Her simple remedies were but emollients at best. All that ignorant love could suggest and unskilled devotion execute was done, but we know now that the battle is not to the loving, but to the learned,—not to her who bathes the brow and kisses the parched lips and weeps over the sufferer, as did the helpless young wife, but to the one with clear head and strong nerve and steady hand who knows how. Poor Beverly!

There were other dangers besides those of unskilled nursing to which he was exposed, and these kept them in constant dread.

Roving bands of jayhawkers and bushwhackers still played hide-and-seek across the prairies, and while the chimneys of Keswick stood as gloomy heralds of the fact that the worst had been done here, and the deserted cabins had little about them that invited cupidity, there was always the plea on one side of looking for lurking guerrillas, and on the other, of seeking needed food.

The food question usually settled itself. There was clearly no hope of forage for man or beast at Keswick.

The other was not so easily disposed of. If the jayhawkers should get wind that Beverly Trevilian was lying helpless on the estate of his father, his chance for life would be slimmer even than it was at the hands of his nurses. It was Mammy's constant care to prevent such a calamity. Uncle Reuben was kept on guard, and at the sight of mounted men instantly gave the alarm.

His good wife, a woman of rare resources, had two charms to conjure with. One was the rebel flag which Virginia and Sallie had made in the days when the war seemed mainly sewing together the crimson bars and singing "The Bonny Blue Flag," and talking about the glory of it all. The other was a pair of soldier-blue trousers and a worn jacket discarded by some Kansas man for a suit of Beverly's best. Mammy used them impartially. At the alarm of soldiers she always got out both.

"Go on down in de bresh, honey," she would say to Lois, who usually stood by in an agony of terror; "you an' Reuben ain't neither of you got any gift at norratin' things! Git out de way, bofe of you, an' I 'll 'ten' to it. Go 'long!"

Then she would ask anxiously: "Which is dey, ole man? Kin you tell?"

Fortunately, the cabin was so situated that they were seldom taken by surprise. If it proved to be the Federals, by the time they were there the blue trousers would be ostentatiously hanging over a chair, while the flag would have been relegated to a place under Mammy's feather-tick, a time-honored receptacle for "colored" valuables.

The first time they came Mammy quaked with fear, lest Beverly himself should betray the secret. The next time, alas! this danger was past. Beverly was groaning in delirium.

The men came in and, of course, wanted to know at once who was in the bed.

"Hit 's a soldier wha' we found down hyarnder in de bresh," was the truthful answer.

"A soldier? How do you know?"

"By his breeches," said Mammy, promptly offering them in evidence. "No, sir; I don't know who 't is, 'cep'n' 't is some po' Union soldier fightin' fur his country, an' I could n' do nothin' but take him in. Do you reckon dey 'll 'low me some rations fur it, cap'n?" she asked anxiously. The man was a corporal. "I 'm takin' mighty good keer of 'im, an' I 'm 'feard it will bring de bushwhackers down on me. Look lak de gov'munt might 'low me somethin' fur it."

"Are any of the men missing?" asked the corporal of his companion. "I think she 's lying."

"Too stupid-looking for that," answered the man. "It certainly is a Federal suit."

Mammy followed them to the door. "You-all don't reckon dat 's a bushwhacker, does you?"—in extreme consternation. "My Lord! I don't wanter be harborin' no secesh! . . . I wisht you 'd ast 'em 'bout de rations, colonel, please, sir." No soldier ever had such rapid promotion as Mammy gave in her haste to propitiate.

And so that danger was averted.

"No, of co'se I don't expect 'em to bring me de rations," she said afterward to Uncle Reuben: "but dey may think dat 's what I 'm keepin' 'im fur. Maybe dey will."

The next day the bushwhackers came—only two—for Quantrell's men had had one of their periodical disbandings. "Scattered soldiers," argued that leader, "make a scattered trail. The regiment that has but one man to hunt can never find him." If only this disbanding could have been permanent the country might have had rest,

but no sooner was the news of the disintegration spread abroad than operations began again, and in daredevil fashion they were riding through the country, bridles in their teeth, a revolver in each hand, and murder in their hearts.

When Mammy knew " for sure " that they were not the Federals, she thrust the trousers under the bed and laid Virginia's little flag near Beverly's hand. To their questions she answered:

" 'T is some po' rebel soldier I foun' down hyarnder in de bresh. No, sir; I don't know his name. I jes' tuk him in fur Marse Beverly's sake. De little flag? Oh, I jes' put it dar so 's he could hol' it. Look lak it ease his min' when he 's at hisself. It do so!"

One of the men advanced to the bed and looked searchingly at the patient. Poor Beverly was past noticing friend or foe that day, and Mammy was at her wits' end. If only she could get a doctor!

" Why!" he cried,—he lived down in the Snai hills.— " this is Beverly Trevilian!"

" Beverly Trevilian!" exclaimed the other, a mere boy to whom Mammy had paid no attention on that very account. He went to the bedside of the sick man.

" Oh, my Lord, young master!" prayed Mammy in an agony of fear, " don't give him up! He ain' gwineter be hyeah long. Let him die in peace!"

" Give him up?" the boy answered. " Give Beverly Trevilian up? Well, I reckon not! His mother saved my life last summer. Look here, old woman!"

He squared himself around before her. " Did n't you ever see me before?"

Mammy looked at him critically. She had seen so many men in the last few years that they had ceased to be of interest to her as men. She only noticed the clothes they wore and whether they had wagons that could carry any

more things off. But as she looked, a light broke over her face—the light of recognition.

"Name er God! Is you dat chile Miss Bettie done nuss thoo a spell er sickness?"

She had never known before that he was a soldier.

"I 'm dat chile, sho'!" he said, mimicking her tone; but he blushed like a girl, for he was at that tender age when a boy of all things wants to be classed as a man.

"Well, how you is growed!" said Mammy.

The other man laughed.

"That 's encouraging! You 'll be a man yet before your mother, Jesse."

Then they turned to the bed.

"Have n't you had a doctor for him?" asked the man.

"No, sir; dey ain't no doctors left in de country, I reckon."

"Where 's that one that attended on me?" the boy asked.

"Gone to glory!" said Mammy. "Ah-h, Lord!"

Then to her earnest protestations that if there was a doctor left in Jackson County she did n't know it, the boy answered with a man's determination:

"Well, there 'll be one to-night, or the devil to pay!" And Mammy set hopefully to work preparing bandages. She was willing even to work it out with the devil if only they could get a doctor.

That night a well-known physician of Kansas City—who may remember the incident, for it was not one likely to be forgotten soon—was called from his bed at the muzzle of a revolver, blindfolded, mounted on a swift horse, and taken on a mad ride across the prairie, between two armed men. The bandage was removed from his eyes at Beverly Trevilian's bedside.

"Dress that man's wound," he was told, "and ask no questions."

When the work was done and medicines and directions given to Mammy, the doctor was taken back to the outskirts of Kansas City and released with the caution to keep a still tongue in his mouth.

"He 's going to die," the older one said; "but we 've given him one more chance, poor fellow!"

"I wish I knew who fired that shot!" said the boy. He was thinking how fine it was to track a man.

As the days went by, the three watchers nursed and prayed. "Dat 's a awful bad sign—pickin' at de bedclo'es," said Mammy, shaking her head. "An' did you hyeah dat ole houn' las' night?"

She said it in an undertone to Uncle Reuben. She had grown strangely tender of the young girl who watched beside her.

One day the picking ceased, and Lois, who caught at every straw and did not have the older woman's experience, asked if he did not seem quieter.

"Yes," Mammy said, shaking her head.

Was n't that a good sign? Lois asked anxiously. And Mammy turned away.

There came a day when the cord was loosed,—and the mourners went about the place.

There was nobody in the neighborhood to call upon. Even Mr. Collins had fled after the tragedy that brought Lois to Keswick. Empty houses only would have echoed their cry had they sent it forth. No sign or sound of life broke the stillness of that great prairie,—no motion of living thing save the flocks of evil birds that circled and swooped and battened—on what (shuddering), one dare not ask.

They buried him under the willow that the old man had planted so many years ago,—and never was dead laid away by gentler hands. The coffin was made from charred boards of the house that was to have been his, and

the tears that fell upon it from the old man's eyes were more in number than the nails he drove into it.

It was rudely fashioned. It was hardly fit for a Trevilian. But they made him a bed of the autumn flowers that grew in his mother's garden, and when the faithful hands that had robed him on his entrance into life had robed him for his solemn exit, they placed him in it and laid over his heart the little flag that Virginia had made.

And so, under the willow, in the six feet of earth that we all may claim, amid the flowers that love had planted and love had plucked, and with the emblem of the cause he had fought for on his breast, the heir of Keswick came to his own!

Ah! many hopes were buried thus in '63!

When it was over they took the young wife back to the cabin. There was nowhere else for her to go. They never once thought of trying to rid themselves of her—these white souls whose skins were black.

In the gray dawn of the September morning that followed, the two old negroes sat before the embers of the open fire. They did not notice that it needed wood, though they shivered now and then and their lips were ashen. On Mammy's breast, that had pillowed the head of the father, lay Beverly Trevilian's infant son.

And from the room beyond came the babble of a girlish voice, and a gurgle of laughter now and then that chilled the blood!

CHAPTER XXXVI

MAMMY VISITS THE PROVOST-MARSHAL

IT was weeks after this that Mammy stood one morning on the horse-blocks vainly trying to coax the old army mule up to a sufficient degree of nearness for her to fall upon him, her jumping days being over. The mule, casting his remaining eye at her generous girth, prudently stepped aside each time at the critical moment.

Mammy was arrayed in a faded black calico riding-skirt and a freshly ironed and slatted sunbonnet which betokened a journey. Uncle Reuben stood by with a bundle of flannel and cambric held gingerly in his arms. They never left the child alone one moment, for in the cabin its mother still babbled softly and crooned and laughed.

"Reuben, lay dat chile down in de grass an' come hyeah an' take holt dis fool animule! Look lak he ain't never seed a ridin'-skeart befo'!"

And, indeed, the beast did seem to be in rebellion and ready to try his hand with the rest at secession. He doubtless felt that the talents of a government employee, even though somewhat past his prime, were being put to ignoble uses this September morning.

"What you layin' off to tell 'em, Dilsey?"

The feat had been accomplished, and Mammy sat triumphant, a rotund mass, on the back of the subdued Bucephalus.

"How I know what I gwineter say," asked Mammy, gathering up the lines and settling herself in the saddle;

"tell I know how fur dey gwine push me? I don't never tell a story 'dout I have to. But ef dey push me, now—" The sentence was unfinished, indicating the wide latitude she allowed herself.

"Dilsey, I mighty 'feard de devil 'll git you, some day," said Uncle Reuben, seriously. He greatly disapproved of Mammy's facile tongue.

"Huccome de devil gwineter git me fur tellin' lies?" demanded Mammy. "Ain't he de father of 'em? I reckon he can't deny de trade! You take keer dat chile," she called back. "Ef you don't, you 'll think something wuss 'n de devil 's done cotch you! Dat you will!"

And they plodded on.

She had got an early start, for the way was long and the mule not swift. She was bound for Independence to answer a summons to appear before the provost-marshal.

Of course the summons had not been for her, but for her husband as the nominal head of the house, but Mammy had more confidence in her own powers of "norration," as we have seen, than in those of her simple-hearted, God-fearing, truth-loving spouse. She determined, therefore, to answer the call herself, putting her husband's failure to appear on the ground of rheumatism and consequent inability.

The case of the wounded soldier harbored at their house had been reported, and also the fact that he was now missing. Their solemn protestation that he was dead was not taken as conclusive, and they were required to report at the military post.

They had been thrown into the greatest alarm by the summons, for the law in its mysterious operations is an awesome thing to children and negroes. On Grand Prairie they had become somewhat accustomed to lawlessness—they certainly had had fine opportunity to do so. But the law!—that was different.

The old woman ambled on, looking back from time to time at the pitiful little row of cabins which was all that was left of the glory of the Trevilian estate.

"Hit don't look much lak Keswick!" she mourned. "I reckon de feastin'-days is over!"

It was a ride to discourage even the stout-hearted, and Mammy's soul had been very downcast since Beverly's death. On every side were burned fences and blackened fields and the ruins of homes. Her progress was marked by ejaculations and groans. It was the first time she had left Keswick since the church was burned.

When she came to Dr. Lay's, she rode up to the silent house unhindered by fence or gate. She would have got down and gone in had she not had the fear of remounting before her eyes, and also, if the truth were told, a superstitious fear of going into the house whose owner had been thrust so violently out of life. Her curiosity got the better of her fears, however, and she rode up close to the windows of the sitting-room.

It was a double house upon the orthodox plan,—two rooms and a passage above and below. She could easily see into the room from her elevation on the mule's back. It was dismantled and bare. Nothing was left but a large "Isabella" stove and the bookcases built in the wall. The books were gone.

She turned the animal's head to the road again, glad to get away from the brooding spirit of desolation that lay over the place.

It was after noon when she reached Independence. She inquired of a man the way to the provost's office and went straight thither. Everybody knew the way to the provost in those days.

Two or three men were in the office when she went in,—one of them a fine-looking Federal officer rather in the background. He was evidently there more from curiosity

than anything else, and it certainly was an admirable place to study human nature and existing conditions.

Mammy had removed her riding-skirt and bonnet, and stood in respectful silence till the provost or his deputy or whoever it was should look up. Then she made him her best curtsey.

"Well," said the man, abruptly, "what do *you* want?"

Mammy protested her entire absence of wants, and the man asked her name, which she gave, adding the information that she belonged to Colonel Trevilian of Keswick.

"De soldier said you wanted to see my ole man, sir; an' he was dat po'ly dat I 's 'bleeged to come in his place, sir."

After a few minutes' consultation with the deputy and some papers, the provost turned to her.

"You are charged," he said ponderously, "with aiding and abetting the enemy. Is this true?"

"*No,* sir!" said Mammy; "hit *ain't* true! You hyeah my racket, I ain't bettin' on none of 'em. I think de whole kit an' bilin' 's half devils!"

The officer over by the window looked vastly amused. This was a new type to him. Mammy's free-and-easy words were without a suspicion of impudence. She was only expressing her opinion in her own way.

"Have n't you been caring for a rebel soldier in your house?" she was asked.

"In de cabin, you mean? Dey ain't no house lef'."

"Well, the cabin, then. Have n't you?"

"Yaassir, I have," Mammy admitted.

"Well, in doing that you have been giving him aid and comfort. You acknowledge that?"

"*No, sir!* I ain't give 'im any aid. I did n' have none to give 'im. We ain't got nothin' lef' but de ole mule—an' he is de mos' ongodlies' ole creetur' ever switched a

tail!" she added, recalling his actions at the horse-blocks. Then she returned to the accusation.

"Aid an' comfort! My Lord! we-all ain't had no comfort ourse'ves sence de white folks gone, let alone givin' of it to anybody else. I jes' nussed 'im, sir; dat 's all I done. I ain't give 'im no aid an' comfort! No, sir!"

"Who was this man you were harboring?" she was asked pointedly.

Mammy hesitated for a brief second. It could do no possible harm, that she could see, to tell this now, and, as she had said, she never prevaricated unless there was a reason for it.

"Dat was Marse Beverly Trevilian, sir," she said slowly and impressively; "my young master wha' j'ined Price's army at de beginnin' of de wah. Yaassir."

"Well, that 's what you are charged with—aiding and abetting the enemy."

Mammy looked at him in unfeigned amazement.

"You call Marse Beverly de enemy? Humph! Ef he 's de *enemy,* who in de name er God you gwineter call de *frien's?*"

"Well, who do you call the enemy?" asked the man. He had caught the infection of the officer's quiet amusement and was willing to have a little fun with her.

"I call dem de enemy wha' 's doin' de devilment," she returned promptly,—"killin' an' plunderin', and runnin' off de stock, an' 'ticin' off de niggers, an'—"

"Come! that will do!" He felt that he had given her too much license. "Now I want you to tell me the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"Yaassir, dat 's what I was gwineter do. But you can't tell de truth 'bout Jackson County—not down our way—'dout you bring in de jayhawkers an' de red-legs. No, sir! *Dey done worked deyse'ves into de norration!*"

"Capital!" said the officer in a low tone to another

who had joined him. "That 's about what they 've done!"

"Yaassir, dem 's who I call de enemy. Why, dey burnt Marse William's house, sir, an' dey tuk de white folk's clothes, dey did, an' Miss Nannie's silk dresses, and her set of pearls wha' was gwineter be Miss Figinia's on her weddin' day."

She stopped abruptly and turned to look at the officer by the window.

"Look to me lak dat 's de ve'y one dat tuk 'em," she said. She had observed that the man was laughing at her, and was willing to avenge herself. "I know 'im by dat mole on his face."

There was a roar of laughter from the officers, in which the suspect joined, and Mammy, with a hardly perceptible smile, turned back to the provost. "De soldiers called 'im Lieutenant Tigerman."

"You 're off the scent this time, old lady," spoke up the officer. "My name is Black."

Mammy turned and looked him over silently, the men waiting with interest to see the outcome. Then she turned back to the group around the provost.

"Yaassir! A heap of 'em has forsook dey names, but look lak you can't denounce a mole! Dat sticks to you!"

There was another laugh at the officer's expense, and then the provost said sternly:

"What was Beverly Trevilian's business here?"

"I never hyeahed 'im say, sir."

"Do you know?"

"No, sir."

"Where did you find him?"

"Down in de bresh."

"Do you mean he was bushwhacking?"

"No, sir; he was layin' dar, wounded an' bleedin' to death, when I found 'im."

"In point of fact, was n't he going straight to your house when he was shot?"

"Yaassir; I reckon he was." Mammy was serious enough now, and so were the others. "But what else could he do, sir?" she asked with simple eloquence. "De house was burned. His paw an' maw was drove off. Dey wa'n't no neighbors. Whar could he go, sir, 'cep'n' 't was to his mammy's house?"

The provost wrote on without looking up.

"You knew he was a rebel," he said. "Why did you take him in?"

Mammy towered above him in a dignity born of the occasion.

"Why did I take Marse Beverly in?" she repeated. "Why, sir, he was my chile! When my little Reuben died and Miss Bettie was so sick, Marse William *give* 'im to me. I raised 'im, sir. I nussed 'im from dis ole breas'!" She struck her bosom with a gesture as dramatic as it was unstudied. "Could I turn 'im off when he was dyin'?"

The officer turned to his companion with a look of wonder on his face.

"It beats the—devil!" he said. Had he come down here to loose a people from bonds like this?

By degrees they got the whole story from her—at least so much as she thought best to tell. She said nothing about the wife or child. So far as she could find out, no living soul knew about this but herself and Uncle Reuben. Respect for the family honor more than anything else kept her silent about it. She had always felt that it was a disgrace. It was not her business, she considered, to make it known.

There were serious faces in that office as she told of his death and burial. Beverly Trevilian was known to many of them. Of course he was a rebel—but—it was a sad end!

"Ef any of you knows whar Marse William is, I wisht you 'd try an' git de word to 'im," she said as she concluded, and there was nobody to jest this time.

"Is dey anything to pay, sir?" she asked hesitatingly, looking much relieved when told there was not. "'Cause we ain't got nothin' but de mule lef'," she explained; "an', as I told you, he 's mighty obnoxious, sir!"

In the laugh that followed she bowed herself out. The officer by the window followed her.

"Here, old lady!" he called. "I don't know your name—"

"Dilsey, sir; 'Aunt Dilsey' dey gen'ally calls me,—de young ones, anyway."

"Aunt Dilsey, then." He spoke it awkwardly, not being accustomed to the familiarity of the appellation. He put a greenback into her hand. "Here, take this and get yourself something to eat."

"Thanky, sir! thanky, young master!" cried Mammy. She did not know why it should be given to her. She had done nothing. But that money was a godsend.

"I hope you 'll 'scuse me, sir, 'bout dat mole. I knowed all time you wa'n't de man. I was jes' foolin'. You got de advantage of dat man in de place yo' mole done choose fur hisse'f. Hisn was on his nose. An' I reckon you got right smart de advantage of him in de fambly you was born in, too! I don't know whether you come f'om ole Figinny, sir, but you sho'ly is got de marks of de quality! Yaassir! Dat you is!"

CHAPTER XXXVII

"A NATION SCATTERED AND PEELED"

IT was the day after Mammy's triumphant return from Independence with saddle-bags whose off side could hardly hold the sundries into which that greenback had been transmuted.

There was tea for the invalid, who turned away from the decoction of sassafras which was the best they had to offer, and a precious package of sugar; there was paregoric for infantile emergencies and colchicum for those of age; down in one corner were a paper of needles and a spool of cotton. ("Dat chile gwineter need short dresses 'fo' long," Mammy had said; "he 's mighty ser*vi*grous in his laigs.") But it cannot be denied that the greater part of the saddle-bags—if one may speak of them in the plural when the femininity of both saddle and rider had made them strictly a one-sided singular—was taken up with twists of tobacco for the mutual delectation of the old couple.

It should be said in strict justice, however, that the very first purchase of all had been a rubber rattle and a blue ribbon to hang it on. A tin one had been offered her, but she would none of it. "Dat chile ain't no po' white trash!" she thought. "Dishyeah one is jes' lak de one his paw had—po' little lamb!"

Nobody could have told of which "little lamb" she was thinking. Possibly she did not know herself.

She had been very jubilant over the success of the trip, detailing it to Uncle Reuben with the circumstantiality

natural to a traveler who did not often take so long a one. The visit to Dr. Lay's and the discovery of the old "Isabella" had put a new notion in their heads. If they continued to keep their new charge—and there seemed no possibility of their doing anything else—they would need another fire. Uncle Reuben had gone over to see the lay of the land literally and ascertain whether the old sled and the maligned mule would be equal to transporting it to Keswick. If he waited for snow there might be nothing to transport. Even stoves were game when nothing else was in sight. One such was taken to Pleasant Hill by a strolling visitor and returned at the close of the war. The borrower said to the owners afterwards that he needed it, and then he thought it would be safer in his house than in theirs—and he was doubtless right.

Uncle Reuben had made his observations and was ready to start home. It had been a mournful investigation. The empty rooms reverberated with the sound of his halting steps,—preternaturally loud they seemed in the stillness. Mournful ejaculations fell from his lips and he shook his head continually as he went from room to room. How often he had driven the white folks through that big gate! he was thinking as he stood by the window and looked out. The gate was gone now—burned with the fence.

He was starting down the stairs when a step below and an exclamation startled him. He drew back and peered through the balusters.

A young man in soldier clothes stood in the doorway. He was looking into the bare rooms with hard-set face. It was Gordon Lay.

He had landed at Kansas City with his regiment that morning. The news of Order No. 11 had reached him soon after its issue, and he had been in a frenzy of anxiety to get tidings of their fate. But the trumpet a soldier

follows is Duty, not Love. He could not leave his regiment.

He had written letter after letter. They lay uncalled for in the little post-office. He wrote to his sister in Kentucky, but her answer failed to reach him, he was shifted so from pillar to post. He had asked for a furlough, only to be met with the answer that the regiment would soon be transferred to the border and he must wait. What was one man amid the tumult of war in '63?

Rumors had come to him that filled him with terror—of fleeing refugees, burning houses, and endangered women. The butchery at Lawrence he knew was bound to bring swift reprisal, and he shuddered to think what that reprisal might be, and whom it might strike. Those were agonizing days for Gordon. If only he could know!

When the boat reached Kansas City that morning and the regiment was disembarked he went straight to his commanding officer and laid the case before him, asking leave of absence, if but for a day. It was granted and he had come in haste.

His fears increased with every mile; they had become well-nigh insupportable; he urged his horse to its utmost speed. And yet he felt from the first that there was nothing he could do! It was a month or more since the order was issued. What might not happen in a month! He was hastening only to learn the worst.

It was indeed a scene of desolation that he looked upon! The fields that he had left in smiling beauty lay blackened and waste. There had been few crops raised in the last two years; there were not many able-bodied men left for the plow and the harrow—they were busy with the sword and the rifle; and the little there was had not been gathered into barns.

Gordon Lay was versed in the Scriptures. Throughout

that ride the lamentations of the prophet were sounding continually in his ears. He said them over at every turn of the road.

"The land mourneth; for the corn is wasted; . . . the harvest of the field is perished." . . . "Alas for the day!"

Here and there, as he looked across the prairie, a zig-zag line of ashes told where a fence had been; the blackened swath on either side showed where it had gone. It did not matter much now about the fences. There were no crops left for the brute creation to ravage, and no stock to do it had there been. The fields were in briers and thistles. The stock was in Kansas.

On every hand Gordon saw with sinking heart the ruins of homes,—here a prostrate mass of brick and mortar that had once been a rendezvous for the gayest of the gay; there, two stone chimneys which measured the breadth of the house that was, and stood like grim sentinels to challenge attention and herald the fact that here a household once lived and loved, and toiled and gathered—and lost.

They were not always recent ruins. Sometimes they would have vines over them—a fragrant climbing honeysuckle that was not quite buried when the crash came, or the old grape-vine that had covered the back porch and tried to do its duty still, creeping over the unsightly pile, and budding and blossoming and bearing fruit. At any rate, it made a shadow from the heat for the lizard and the slug. How could it know in its insensate heart that the soul of that home was gone and only its bleaching bones were to be sheltered henceforth?

There seemed to Gordon something infinitely pathetic in the sight of the summer-houses and grape-arbors, more even than in the wasted fields. Such things speak so of human life and its joys. Once he noticed what had been a child's swing, the rope cut as high as a man's hand could

reach and the ends dangling from the limbs of the walnut tree. Under it was the path worn bare by little feet. The rope had been used to tie up the bedding that went to Kansas. Where were the children?

Occasionally he would see houses that the torch had failed to find, or, more merciful than its fellows, had spared. He rode up to some of them. They were always empty. Where were the people?

Often there were signs of recent occupation,—an ax sticking in a log at the wood-pile, a basket of chips gathered and left; and he noticed frequently at the horse-blocks children's bulky playthings that had been brought out in the forlorn hope of taking them along, and abandoned as impossible, apparently, before starting. In one place was a little red cart. Surely that might have been taken! He did not know that that family went out as the Holy Family took their flight into Egypt, the mother on a mule, with the weeping owner of the cart in her lap, while the aged grandfather walked at their side. If only the cart could have carried the baby, it might have gone along.

As he drew nearer home, Gordon's gloom deepened. These places were all familiar to him; each one had its memories, and they were all a young man's memories—bright and joyous. It did not seem to him that they could ever be the abode of anything happy again. Joy seemed blotted out of the world.

The chimney sentinels grew thicker. He remembered Virginia's writing to him that she had stood on the portico at Keswick one night and counted twenty burning buildings. It had seemed incredible. He could believe it now. The chimneys corroborated the story.

He raised himself in the saddle and drew in a long breath, exhaling it with a sudden, explosive force. The vast stillness oppressed him. It was broken only by his

horse's hoofs. There was not a sound, not a sign of life on all that broad prairie.

It was a relief to him to pass through a stretch of timber and hear a blue-jay. Something was alive, anyway. A squirrel ran out on the limb of a tree, with its tail whisked over its back in the old familiar fashion. Gordon looked at it with a strange feeling of interest. He and Beverly used to go hunting for squirrels. How had he ever been so cruel as to shoot one? He felt the remorse of the Ancient Mariner when

> "With his cruel bow he laid full low
> The harmless Albatross."

He had never realized before how much the bark of dog, the lowing of the herd, and all the common barn-yard sounds gave cheer and tone to country scene. Even the discordant cry of the peacock or the guinea-hen would have sounded sweet. There was such a polar stillness over everything! It chilled his soul.

He pressed on. From the hill just beyond he knew he could see Virginia's home and his own. His heart was beating a tattoo that made him forget the stillness. It had been so long since he had seen her!

When he reached the hill he stopped short. A groan burst from his lips. The white pillars, streaked with smoke, were outlined against the blue sky.

He looked to the right. His own home was standing. Thank God for that! But would there be anybody there? After all he had this day seen, he did not dare to hope it.

When he reached the house he flung his bridle over the post, half expecting to see a negro boy come shambling from the rear. None came. He strode to the open door, with some wonder that it should be open. He did not know that it was better thus than locked, for then it

would surely be battered in. He stopped on the threshold. One glance told him the worst. They were not there.

He went through it room by room. The parlor had with wanton vandalism been used for stabling horses. The walls of tinted lavender were covered with obscene writing and pictures. The floors bore evidence of having been hastily dismantled, for the straw was left and there were tags of carpeting where it had been torn up. There was nothing left but the old "Isabella."

Uncle Reuben had taken the opportunity, when the newcomer had gone to the back rooms, to tiptoe softly down the stairs. He had not recognized Gordon, and he had learned from bitter experience that while loneliness is bad, objectionable neighbors are worse. He proposed to leave this prowling young soldier in full possession. Slipping behind a rose-bush, he awaited his opportunity to retire unobserved.

He was too late. There was the click of a revolver, and Gordon stepped boldly to the other side of the rose-bush. Bushes had a way of yielding strange fruit in those days. He would see what this was.

At sight of the old man his hand dropped.

"Uncle Reuben! Why—"

"My Lord in heaven! Hit 's Marse Gordon! Well, Marse Gordon, I cert'n'y is glad to see you, sir! I is, indeed!"

"Where did you come from?" demanded Gordon.

"F'om Keswick, sir. De cabins ain't burnt. Hit 's de house."

"Tell me about the family! Where are they?"

"You mean our fambly, sir?"

"Yes, and mine, too. Where are they all?"

"Dey gone, sir!"

"Where? Where is my father?"

Uncle Reuben's jaw dropped and his face grew ashen. He stared at the young man with dilating eyes.

"Marse Gordon, sir! ain't you hyeahed?"

"Heard? No! I have heard nothing! Where is my father?"

The old man stood with bowed head. Then, with a gesture toward the heavens, smiling blue and serene above them as if from that far height they looked down upon no sin and sorrow, he said solemnly:

"'Whar de wicked cease f'om troublin', an' de weary is at rest.'"

"My God!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

GORDON TAKES THE HELM

MY GOD!

It was the cry lifted up on Calvary. It has been the outpouring of stricken hearts ever since. It filled the air in '63,—where the cannon crashed and the battle raged, and at home next day when the lists were read. It fell from the lips of beardless boys who had not got away from their mothers' God; it rose from hearts unused to pray; it was wrung often—oh, so often!—from anguished ones kneeling by empty beds!

My God!

It is the soul's instinctive appeal for help, in danger, in bereavement, from the terror that cometh by night and the arrow that flieth by day, the pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at noonday. Whether we trust or whether we scoff, it is all the same. When extremity comes, we feel a need that reaches out and up. We were strong, but now we are weak—and all alike we pray:

"My God!"

It is humanity's cry in the dark.

Uncle Reuben's tale was one little calculated to reassure the bereaved son. He felt more and more his mother's need of him. And where was she? Where were they all?

On this point the old man, graphic and reliable as he was on what he knew, was at fault. Geography was a

sealed book to him. To all of Gordon's questions and entreaties he could only say:

"Marse Gordon, sir, I been chastisin' my memory to think of dat place, but I 've clean forgot de name!"

"Think hard!" Gordon urged. "Was it St. Louis?"

"No, sir. Don't look lak dat was de name."

"It was n't Kansas City?"

"No, sir!" Uncle Reuben repudiated this thought with scorn. He did know that Kansas City was to the west. "Dey tuk de Lexington road."

"Could it have been Kentucky?" He felt sure that his mother would go straight to his married sister in Kentucky, hence his main anxiety now was to get the destination of the Trevilians.

Uncle Reuben shook his head.

"No, sir; dat wa'n't de town. Seem lak I hyeahed somethin' about yo' maw goin' dar, but not Marse William. No, sir!"

Gordon mentioned several possible places. He really had very little idea what point Colonel Trevilian would be likely to select. His kindred were all in Virginia, but of course he had not gone there.

Uncle Reuben was thinking deeply. "Marse Gordon," he said with a gleam of hope, "you don't reckon dat place could 'a' been Charlottesville?"

Gordon turned away in despair.

They went over to the cabin, and on the way Uncle Reuben unfolded to him the other sad tale, of Beverly and Beverly's wife and child. For a part of this he was partially prepared, but the death of his friend was a blow, as was Lois's condition.

"She jes' lays dar talkin' to herself an' singin' sorter low like to de rag baby wha' Dilsey done made her. She don't know dat ain't a sho'-'nough chile. No, sir! Why, Marse Gordon, she tries to nuss it!"

When Mammy saw Gordon her joy knew no bounds. She immediately slipped from her bent shoulders to his strong ones the burden she had been carrying. She was not much accustomed to responsibility of a grave sort, having all her life had questions settled for her. Necessity had pressed it upon her in these latter days, but at the sight of a white face she transferred it promptly, deferring to his judgment in all things.

They took him in to see the girl. She was propped up in bed, her golden hair falling about her like a sunlit cloud, and her face beautiful as he had never seen it—an etherealized beauty that smote his heart. Poor Beverly!

She looked at him with unrecognizing glance. When he took her hand and spoke, a troubled look came into her eyes, as if sleeping memories had been stirred, and she lifted the grieved chin of a child to him.

"Will Beverly come to-day?"

He turned away. He could not trust himself to speak.

It was with strange sensations that he stood beside the mite of humanity that lay in Mammy's lap, which they told him was Beverly Trevilian's child. A great wave of pity swept over him. This little one had come into life heavily freighted. Without much thought, he held out his finger to the tiny hand. It closed upon it instantly. It is a trick babies have of worming themselves into people's hearts. It thrilled the man like an appeal.

Beverly's child!

And Beverly had never seen it! It would never know a father's care, nor—

A low sound came to them from the other room—the soft croon of a cradle-song to the tune of "Come, thou fount of every blessing."

"Hush, my dear, lie still and slumber,
Holy angels guard thy bed."

"She 's puttin' de rag chile to sleep," whispered Mammy. "She does dat *con*stant."

Gordon's strong hand closed around the helpless one that clutched his finger. Poor little orphan! Fatherless and motherless!

"Marse Gordon," said Mammy, looking down anxiously into the wrinkled face, "does you see de favor of Marse Beverly in dis chile? Seem to me he looks mo' lak Miss Lois's folks den he do lak his own folks!"

From his two humble friends—for they were drawn close together now by a common sorrow and a common interest—Gordon heard all the details,—the sack of Keswick, the exodus, and, later, Beverly's sickness and death. The only place where their memories failed was at the destination of the families. This is not to be wondered at. Uncle Reuben and Mammy were like unlettered children. To them there were two places in the world—Missouri and "Figinny,"—or, more specifically, Jackson County and Albemarle.

And, then, such a flood of calamities had come upon them in the last few weeks it is not strange that an unknown name should have been swept away. But it made Gordon's search infinitely harder.

"Dilsey," said Uncle Reuben at length, "is you done forgot dat paper?"

Mammy put the baby into Gordon's arms before he could either retreat or enter a protest.

"Hyeah, Marse Gordon, take dis chile! You got to learn how sometime!"

He held it gingerly, afraid to move lest he should break it, afraid to stir lest it should cry, watching its little wrinkled, puckery face with a strange fascination. Beverly's child!

Mammy turned back the corner of her feather-bed and drew forth a package.

Gordon put the baby into Uncle Reuben's arms and turned to her.

"Here 't is, Marse Gordon—here 's de stiffkit."

"The marriage certificate?" he cried. "Oh! what a help! Where did you get it? I was afraid they might not have one."

Mammy related with pardonable pride the story of how it was lost and found. "Yaassir!" she said exultantly; "I was boun' to have dat stiffkit! I wa'n't gwineter let nobody take away dat chile's mess of potash ef I could help it! No, sir!"

Gordon took the paper, smiling at her words. A marriage certificate would straighten things out wonderfully in years to come. As he read, his smile faded.

"Is it all right, Marse Gordon?" asked Mammy, anxiously.

"No, Mammy," he said—and he said it with great gentleness; "it is not the certificate at all. It is a receipt."

Mammy dropped into a chair. Then, as the full force of it came to her, she turned to Uncle Reuben. "Gimme de chile," she said brokenly. "Po' lamb! . . . po' lamb!"

Gordon had not the heart to tell her what the paper that she had been guarding with such jealous care was. It was a receipt for half-soling a pair of shoes, dated in Arkansas, and drawn up in Beverly's writing. The consideration mentioned in the document for the service rendered was one hundred and fifty dollars, Confederate money. It was signed:

his
JOEL × CRAWFORD
mark.

In the corner at the left hand were the names of two witnesses, John Pasco and Ike Swamscott, and after the

latter name was scrawled: "High private in the rear ranks."

Gordon could see the whole scene—the hilarity with which the receipt had been demanded, and given, and duly witnessed,—and how it had been preserved to laugh over afterward. The contrast between that scene and this seemed almost ghastly.

Uncle Reuben picked up the package.

"Dilsey done forgot de letters," he said, and Beverly took them.

"Marse Gordon," Mammy interrupted,—she would not give it up yet,—"ain't dey some sorter book whar de marriages an' taxes an' things is wrote down?"

"Yes, but you know, Mammy, things have been in such a state in this part of the country that everything has gone to pieces. There are no county officers now, and even the books are gone. I 'm afraid we will have to give it up."

He took the letters—there were two of them—written by Beverly Trevilian when the sands of life were running low. One was to his father—the other to Gordon.

"You take 'em both, Marse Gordon. I don't know what to do wi' dat letter. You git it to Marse William when you find out whar dey is. I done promise Marse Beverly."

Gordon took the letters and rose. The very sight of them stirred him. He could not read his here.

He went to the willow beneath whose shade he and Beverly had so often lain and talked and planned the future. They used to go there sometimes to play "mumble-peg." The place was full of surging memories to him, as indeed what spot about Keswick was not?

Standing by the mound where the other one lay, he read the letter. It was written on a leaf torn from a notebook and was short. The writing faltered at the last and

grew shaky. It seemed to him like a message from the other world.

"DEAR GORDON," it said, "I am almost gone. Mammy tries to make me think I shall get well, but I know to-day I never shall. I wish I could!—oh, how I wish I could! for the sake of the little girl who is sitting by me—my wife. You were right in what you said that day, Gordon. I ought n't to have married her till the war was over. But—I did; and then, when she wrote me—I could n't stay away. I had to come! But it brought me to my death. Gordon, will you take care of her until you can find father? I have written to him, but we don't know where he is. I know you will be sure to come back here, and I 'm writing this to leave for you. It 's hard to go! but—you 'll take care of her, won't you, Gordon? We 've fought on different sides, but I know you 'll forget that for the sake of old times."

The word straggled off across the page, as if the hand had failed. Then the writing began again—there was something else that must be said.

"Tell mother it 's all right with me. Good-by."

It had no signature. It did not need any.

Gordon stood motionless. A swaying pendant touched his cheek. When it swept back, the willow leaves were wet. He caught the branch and held it with a grip such as he might have given a hand.

"Bev, old fellow!" . . . The boyish name slipped from him unawares. They seemed very close to each other then—the living and the dead. He looked up to the skies and raised his right hand. His lips were firm-set. "So—help me—God!" he said.

That night Gordon Lay sat out on the horse-blocks, where he and Virginia and Mrs. Trevilian used to sit studying the stars. He was not doing that now. He was trying to think it out.

Lois needed care—medical care. That was the first thing. If her malady were taken in time, it might be cured. He was physician enough to know that every day lessened this probability. If he waited to hear from Colonel Trevilian before moving in the matter, it might be too late. What ought he to do?

Then, even if he should be immediately successful in the search which he intended to institute, was it not likely that his letter would find Colonel Trevilian in no financial condition to meet this new obligation,—perhaps even in no physical condition, after all he had been through, to make such a trying journey. There was no question that she ought to be taken to the asylum. This was no place for her, certainly. Ought he not to do it?

There was no thought in his mind that the thing would have a sinister appearance,—he would not have harbored it had there been. Beverly had left her to his care until his father should be found. There was nobody else to take the responsibility. Mammy, even, could not be spared to go with them. There was nothing to do but for him to take her to Fulton.

This settled, his thoughts turned to Virginia and his mother. His own family, he felt sure, would go directly to Kentucky. He would write immediately to his sister there, making inquiries, and would send a letter to Virginia for Sallie to forward. Of course Sallie would know where they were, and it would save time. It would be ten days or two weeks then before he could hope for a reply. But when he did—

He went off then into a blissful reverie, from which he

stirred himself at last to go to the pallet that Mammy had spread for him in the loom-house.

He told them of his plan the next morning. It was not questioned except as to the possibility of it.

"I thought de 'sylum had been shut up endurin' of de wah," Mammy said. She had heard them tell of its being closed by order of Governor Jackson early in '61, that the bedding might be used for the soldiers. She remembered it because of the talk it made when the patients were sent back to their respective counties, to their homes and the poorhouses and jails.

"It has just been reopened," Gordon answered. "How soon could she go?"

"I reckon she could go mos' any time. I 'm jes' keepin' her in de bed 'cause dat seem lak hit 's de safes' place fur 'er."

"Get her clothes ready, then, and as soon as I can get leave of absence I will take her down."

"Marse Gordon, you ain't gwine take little Beverly, is you?" Mammy spoke anxiously. She had named the child herself.

"You can have the baby until we hear from Colonel Trevilian. I think he belongs to you by good right. He certainly could n't be in better hands. I 'll send the cow down as soon as I get to Kansas City."

"Yaassir; ef you please, sir. Look lak ole Star ain't gwine hold out tell his little toofies come."

Mammy had adopted another generation.

And so one day they put the gentle, sweet-faced girl, with her belongings, in a carriage, and Gordon drove her to the station, where they took the train for Fulton. Mammy had made her a fresh "rag chile," and dressed it in a real baby dress and shawl and cap for the journey. It seemed the last thing she could do for her.

The girl had fallen into a settled melancholy now, and hugged the baby to her and wept softly as they rode in the cars, Gordon watching her from his seat behind. He spoke to her occasionally, but she would only shake her head and weep afresh.

"Who is it you 've got there?" asked a man he met on the train. The man had known Gordon in the old neighborhood.

"Nobody that you know, I think," Gordon said briefly. "It is a lady I am taking to a place of safety. Jackson County is no place now for any woman that can get away."

He did not care to enlighten the man, who was a garrulous gossip, despite his sex.

The girl was young and beautiful. The man looked at the trio and drew his own conclusions. He repeated them afterward as facts. It is a way we have of carrying on the devil's work!

CHAPTER XXXIX

FORTY YEARS AGO

GORDON LAY was sitting in the low-ceiled bare reception-room of the State Lunatic Asylum. In front of him was the mild-mannered, sharp-eyed superintendent of that institution, who always saw to the bottom of things through or over his spectacles.

It was his business to ask questions, and he was a past master in the art. When that conference came to an end, Gordon felt that he had been on the witness-stand. Many another has felt the same way. But the mild-mannered gentleman's questions were always pertinent, if searching, and the lowliest was accorded courteous treatment. A rare man was Dr. T. R. H. Smith. The State's unfortunates could not have fallen into better hands.

Poor Lois had been taken in charge by the kind-hearted matron, who had recently been installed and was so new to the business that her heart bled for every arrival, and they were very frequent just now. From the remotest borders of the State came pouring back the forlorn ones. If anybody is in doubt of the insane-asylums' being the best fruit of an advanced civilization, let him witness the closing of one for two years and the reopening.

The girl had shown no feeling at parting with Gordon, but hugged to her breast the doll.

"You say you cannot certify this marriage?" the superintendent was saying.

"No, sir. I have only the word of my friend in the letter he left me."

"You could not get a certificate of marriage from the minister who performed the ceremony?"

"No, sir;—not at present. He left the county, as everybody else did, under Order No. 11, and I have no means of knowing where he is."

"Do you know that he is alive?"

"No, sir."

"You do not even know that Colonel Trevilian will receive her as his daughter?"

"No, sir; but—"

"Yes. Just a moment. Suppose he should repudiate this marriage and decline to burden himself with the young woman's support, what would you wish us to do? Is she then to be turned over to the county?"

"I should not wish her to be put upon the county," Gordon said firmly. "She is my dead friend's wife. Until she is recognized by her husband's family, you may look to me for her support."

"Ah!" The superintendent lowered his head and looked at the young man over his glasses. His face was inscrutable, but Gordon flushed under his gaze.

"I hardly feel that we would be justified, Lieutenant Lay, in receiving this young woman under the name of Trevilian. She will be entered as Miss Lois Chandler. The change of name can be made at any time that Colonel Trevilian directs it."

And so poor Lois was denied, even in a lunatic asylum, the poor dignity of her matron's title and her husband's name.

In the time that had intervened between his visit to the old neighborhood and his trip to Fulton, Gordon had made haste to communicate with his sister, and had had the cheering assurance that his mother, Mrs. Devereau,

and Sallie were safe under her roof. She did not know about the Trevilians. On his return to Kansas City, he found a letter there from his mother. At the close of it she said:

"We have just found out where the Trevilians are. When we left them at Lexington, where we took the boat for St. Louis, they expected to go to Booneville, and we wrote there as soon as we got to Kentucky. We could not imagine why we did not hear from them. It seems that they changed their plans and went on to Jefferson City, where they now are."

Gordon ground his teeth. Why had n't he known this before his trip to Fulton? He had passed through Jefferson City twice—going and coming. The last time he had been there a day and night! His mother continued:

"Gordon, Virginia Trevilian is the bravest girl I ever saw. I don't know what we should have done without her on that fearful journey. And do you know, she walked all the way to Lexington? Of course her father did, too, for that matter, but such things are hard on a woman. We went very slowly, having nothing but the calves to the cart, and one old worn-out army horse that sister and Sallie rode time about (it would n't carry double, and, really, I don't think it would have been able to). I wanted Virginia to let me walk sometimes while she took my place in the cart, but she would n't hear to it. I really think she felt that she must be near her father. He was in a dreadful state the night Keswick was burned. He just seemed to give up. Oh, my son, we have lived through frightful scenes! I pray God, the end may come soon! When I think of all we have passed through in

Jackson County, I wonder we are not more of us in the lunatic asylum!

"On the way down we all tried to help each other, and be as cheerful as we could. But it was easier for Virginia and Sallie than for those of us who are older,—though Miss Nannie did say she caught Virginia crying once—just for a few minutes."

Gordon wrote to Virginia that night, explaining that he had been through Jefferson City but did not know they were there. He did not tell her his business.

The next day he wrote to Colonel Trevilian, telling Beverly's sad story and his own action in regard to Lois. This letter took more time than the one to Virginia, for the story must be tenderly told. He inclosed in it the one Beverly had written, and mailed it. Then he sat down to wait with such patience as he could command.

The stock was not large, it must be admitted. He was in a fever of anxiety to know how they were faring. Even the little glimpse his mother had given him of her made her dearer to him. She *was* brave! and his mother loved her already. It would be hard to break Virginia's spirit, he thought with a throb of pride.

Letters came promptly from Kentucky, but he looked in vain for a Jefferson City postmark. He went to the office three times a day, though he knew the third time would be fruitless, unless they had overlooked it. When our friends fail us, we always revile the postmaster. The Missouri Pacific had not reached Kansas City yet, and the mail had to be brought from the terminus in the old way, except that a "citizens' guard" had been added.

There were people in the town that he knew, and he might have spent his leisure time with them, but he felt no inclination for society. Instead, he put in his time, when he was off duty, in tramping up and down the hills

that are now Kansas City, in threading the ravines that later gave direction to her thoroughfares, and strolling aimlessly over the Kaw bottom, checkered to-day with a labyrinth of tracks and switches and railroad yards, alive with cars from the four corners of the earth, and puffing locomotives that switch and snort and make night hideous with their groans and seem to be entirely out of their head. It was virgin bottom then.

Sometimes he would clamber like a goat up the bluff overlooking all this, where the squatters' cabins perch like Swiss chalets on shelving terraces and one half expects to hear an Alpine horn and see the chamois leap from cliff to cliff.

Then, wearied out with the steep climb, he would sit on the brink of the precipice that is now Belleview Avenue, and from that unrivaled point of vantage look out upon the "world and all the kingdoms of it" stretched below him—the endless plain covered with sunflowers, and the great river which makes an elbow here and then flows on, turbid and raging sometimes and full of fierce power, slashing into fruitful farms and undermining the sycamores till at last they drop helplessly into its insatiable maw, but oftener so weary and tired of it all that it has not strength or decency to cover its own bare bones, which stretch out in long lines of treacherous sand-bar.

As he sat looking at all this, of what was Gordon thinking?

Of Thomas Benton, Missouri's great prophet, who, with packing-houses and factories and grain-elevators and teeming railroad stations pictured on the retina of his far-seeing eye, while yet they were not, had said: "This will be the site of a great commercial and manufacturing community some day"?

No.

Of John C. Frémont, who, after treading many pas-

sages and opening many doors, had declared: "This is the key to the immense territory to the west of us"?

Not at all! He was thinking of Virginia and whether it was time for the mail to be in.

Sometimes he would stroll down the levee, looking at the signs, many of which bore Spanish and French names, for the Santa Fé trade had been a power in western Missouri, and its outfitting posts had crept westward year by year from Old Franklin to Booneville and Fort Osage and Liberty and Independence, and finally to its natural place—Kansas City. The old levee had been a busy place in those palmy days. If its business life was crowded into the narrow space under the bluff, it was but concentrated, and made up in intensity what it lost in breadth.

Those were the days when it was worth while to live in a river town, with a great fleet of steamboats and packets and barges and flat-boats and river craft of every sort gliding endlessly by. The old Missouri was teeming with life then. Palatial steamboats, with gaily dressed ladies sitting on the guards, and bands and calliopes playing, plowed the muddy waves and missed the sandbars when they could. The names of boats and captains were as household words. They vied with one another then in bed and board, and people tell yet of the tables they set, and how the Missouri River water is the best water in the world—when it has *settled!*

In the fifties the boats came in loaded to bursting from hold to hurricane deck—horses and wagons, cattle and mules below, furniture and household goods piled high aloft, and humanity sandwiched in between. The West was taking on a great impetus then—the wilderness was stretching out its hands, and even the buffaloes were ready to be stripped.

When the boat came in then people went down to the

landing to meet it and see the newcomers. It was the great commercial mart. There was drumming to be done for the hotels, real-estate agencies, and outfitting houses. It was the popular recreation to go there. It took the place of golf-links and football-grounds.

Yes, a busy place was the levee from '55 to '61. The new town was the natural distributing-point for Kansas. Kansas emigrants with nasal twang and sparse belongings looked with faith to the promised land beyond the Kaw, and "border ruffians" glared at them from under broad-brimmed hats; negro stevedores went back and forth over the gangway and emptied the steamboat's load wherever a place could be found for it,—and often the place was under the canopy of heaven instead of the roof of the warehouse: swaggering, roistering "bullwhackers," as the Santa Fé drivers were called, strode up and down, cracking their whips and crying to their oxen and mules in Spanish, French, or Choctaw, as the case might be.

A busy scene, indeed, was the levee in the fifties. But Gordon found no difficulty in getting through it now. The great pulsing heart seemed stricken with paralysis.

He went on down by the old Gillis house, still standing, but given up to water-rats. It had been headquarters for the free-State men in the stormy days of the border quarrel. It had sheltered Governor Reeder when his life was sought, and he escaped from it in the disguise of a wood-cutter, so says the chronicle.

He noticed, as he looked idly around, the name of F. X. Aubrey, and remembered the story he had heard from his father's lips of F. X. Aubrey's mad ride from Santa Fé to Independence, a distance of eight hundred miles. He smiled as he recalled it. It seemed to be proof that what a man must do he can. F. X. Aubrey wagered ten thousand dollars that he could make it in six days, and

found takers. He did it in five and a half. Then he said he could do it in four days, and they bet him twenty thousand dollars he could n't. He rode into Independence at the end of three days and a half!

They did not erect triumphal arches in those days, but he had a boat named for him. That was the way they sounded a great man's praises in the West.

Business was leaving the levee before the war. Ten years before, in fact, it had outgrown these narrow limits and a few venturesome spirits had sought locations on the hills. A start once made, others followed, and it was not long until the levee was given up to wholesale houses and shipping interests.

The city was creeping up the ravines which have since been named Main Street and Market Street (or Grand Avenue, as it now calls itself). In the days when it was a ravine road, a thoroughfare only for the Santa Fé trains, it was content—nay, proud—to be Market Street, for " Market Street " had a metropolitan sound to people who picked their own wild greens and cured their own bacon, and raised the corn that was to make the " dumplings," even, in blissful hope of a market some day. An avenue had not come into their wildest dreams,—certainly not a boulevard! for they still climbed the hills from Market gorge to Main Street ravine, and thence to Broadway gulch, with difficulty, hoping only for cross-cuts some day that would make life a little less arduous.

It is a pity that everybody in the country could not have had one view of this town of dogged determination when it was getting itself made! It would have been a lesson to the timid builder of cities—an eye-opener as to the relative importance of site and topography.

Strangers holding on to their breath and their scalps as they go up the steep grades of the Ninth Street cable, or down the hair-raising descent of the viaduct leading to

the Union Depot, are wont to remark with chattering teeth that Kansas City is rather hilly; but to the old settler who remembers it in the days of its youthful angularities it seems now like a tennis-court for smoothness.

In 1863, when Gordon Lay was restlessly threading its hollows and climbing its heights, the dwellings looked down a distance of thirty or forty feet into their neighbors' chimneys, the neighbor having decided to conform to the grade. From these aeries one descended at imminent risk of life and limb. But people who wanted to be permanent must perforce meet the grade, and people who were transient of course would n't, so there were a good many left high up in the world then, if never before.

An enterprising young man visited this ragged city at the close of the war. "I went to stay," he said thirty years afterward, "with money in my pocket to invest. Well! I took a look around and decided it could not be done. But it was! If I had put my money into those hills and sat down and done nothing for the rest of my life, I should have been better off in this world's goods than I am to-day after a life of hard work."

It would have been a good time for a young man like Gordon Lay to have been thinking of investments, but he was not doing it. He had caught sight of a squad of mounted men guarding the stage-coach. He quickened his steps. The mail was in.

He lounged around until it was opened, saying to himself that he knew there would n't be one—so as to lessen his disappointment when it did not come.

But the letter came.

There were two of them. He was not surprised at this, for he had written one to Virginia and one to her father. They were thick and promising-looking, and both in Virginia's writing. He could not wait. He stopped under a tree on his way to the barracks. Nobody was

looking, and he kissed the name her hand had penned. Then he tore it open.

He looked at the thing that fell out with eyes that refused to comprehend. Mechanically, he tore open the other. It was like it.

They were his own unopened letters!

CHAPTER XL

"THE OLD ORDER CHANGETH"

WHEN the Trevilians reached Jefferson City they did what hundreds of refugees from the depopulated counties were doing in different parts of the State. They went first to the home of friends whose hearts were big enough to take them in with all their poverty and wretchedness.

The one gleam of sunlight on this dark page was the infinite depths of human sympathy it brought to light. The people of Missouri were sore pressed in '63. Business was paralyzed; money was hard to get; death was rampant; and taxes went on.

But when the fleeing refugees came, thrust out by powerful, pitiless hands, they "took them in and ministered to them." Old furniture long disabled was mended up and put into empty hands; the children were huddled closer together that the surplus bedding might go to cover shivering little ones; storerooms were ransacked to find something that could be spared for those who had nothing. In many cases it was, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have, give I thee."

Said one of those refugees thirty years afterward, holding up a battered dripping-pan as she spoke: "This, with a stove, was sent to me by Mrs. Emily Henderson when I went down to Fulton in '63. A house and lot would not be to me now what that cook-stove was then!"

The good Samaritan who had taken them in said to Colonel Trevilian a day or two after they arrived:

"Colonel, I have a little old house down here"—it really was in Poverty Hollow, but he did n't like to say so—"that does n't bring me in anything. I can't rent it. I am ashamed to offer it to you, but if you could make it do till you can look around—"

Colonel Trevilian grasped his hand, every feature working with emotion.

"My friend!" he said; "I shall take it as a gift from God!"

And so, in a little shack, with an old rag-carpet given by one, a cord-bedstead and a trundle-bed by another, with such odds and ends as the good Samaritan's wife could collect, the Trevilians began again in Poverty Hollow.

It was much in those days to have temporary relief, but when they were housed and fed and clothed, and the oil of consolation poured into bruised hearts, there was always the pressing, immanent question of maintenance. They were comfortable now, but "what should they eat and what should they drink and wherewithal should they be clothed" to-morrow?

Colonel Trevilian asked himself this question with agonizing iteration as he walked the streets of the capital city. He was just the kind of man to shrink from either debt or dependence. And yet—the owner of thousands of acres of the richest land in the State—he was penniless.

What they would have done without the cow nobody knows. But the cow rose to the occasion. People can live a long time on milk. Then a grocer was found who did not have a cow, and a washerwoman who could not sew, and a system of barter sprang up.

"It is n't as if we really worked for money," said Miss Nannie to Virginia. "We 've always done their sewing while they did our washing."

"Of course," assented Virginia, tearing off the widths

of Aunt Silvy's new dress. She was wondering how she could get some shoes.

Aunt Silvy precipitated the economic question that was bound to be settled sometime.

"Miss Nannie, I 'm mons'us proud of dat frock you-all made me. I showed it to ole 'oman Judy, an' now she say ain't you gwineter make her one? I tole her you made mine fur de washin', an' she 'low she got some mighty fine chickens she 'd give you fur de makin' of a dress."

Miss Nannie raised the cover of a box before she answered, and looked in. There was a little piece of middling there—nothing else. And Mrs. Trevilian was sick and had been wishing that very morning for chicken-soup! She turned to Aunt Silvy.

"Tell her to bring the dress over," she said. "I 'll make it."

She told Virginia about it that night. "Don't tell your father," she said; "you know how he feels about women working." They had to tell Mrs. Trevilian.

They had been doing this kind of surreptitious work for months when, one day, a mulatto woman arrayed in tagged-out finery that presented a striking contrast to the comfortable plaid linseys of a few years ago knocked at the front door.

Miss Nannie was alone. She had seen the woman from the window. She replied to the knock before it ended.

"Go around to the back door!" she said without circumlocution, her eyes flashing.

The woman hesitated, made a face at the closed door, and obeyed. When she came in, she stood transfixed.

"Laws-a-mercy! Ef it ain't Miss Nannie Trevilian!" she exclaimed.

Miss Nannie looked up quietly from her sewing.

"Howdy, Tildy! You are Mrs. Pasco's Tildy, ain't you?"

The woman threw herself sprawling into the only rocking-chair the room held.

"No'm!" she said, bridling. "I ain't nobody's Tildy! I b'longs to myself now. Ain't you hyeahed about de procermation?"

"The proclamation?" repeated Miss Nannie, dryly. "Yes, I believe I have."

"I 'm Miss Maude Hubbard now," said the girl, with a simper. "I don't go by de name er Tildy no mo'. I done tuk de name er Hubbard—Miss Maude Hubbard."

For some reason Miss Nannie, who was kindness and consideration itself to Aunt Silvy and Aunt Judy and the rest of the white-turbaned tribe, was not responsive to Miss Maude Hubbard.

The woman rocked herself back and forth, eying the silent seamstress with evident satisfaction.

"How did you know we were here?" asked Miss Nannie.

"One er de colored ladies tole me dey was a white woman over here dat tuk in sewin', but I never 'spicioned it was you, Miss Nannie. I never 'spected to see de day when you 'd be sewin' fur de colored people!"

"I don't know why," said Miss Nannie. "I 've sewed for them all my life."

"But you ain't done it fur pay," returned the girl, striking with unerring instinct at the sorest spot. "Dat 's what I 'm miratin' about, you doin' of it fur pay!"

Miss Nannie was speechless with rage.

Tildy was looking critically around the bare room. "Looks like you was seein' mighty hard times, Miss Nannie. Where 's all yo' things?"

"Gone to Kansas," said Miss Nannie, grimly.

"To Kansas! What fur?"

"To help put down the rebellion!"

"What 'd you say, Miss Nannie?"

"I said the Kansas soldiers took them,—the same that took you, I reckon."

"Aw!" She lapsed into silence, looking through the open door into the other room and taking in with pleasure all its poverty and bareness.

"De war 's made a heap er changes," she remarked complacently. She was misled by Miss Nannie's impassive manner.

"What do you want?" Miss Nannie asked abruptly. She felt her patience giving way.

The woman turned to her bundle.

"Is you ever made any party dresses, Miss Nannie?"

"Yes." She was thinking of the last one she had had. It was of lavender silk, and she had made it to wear to Tom Caldwell's infare out on the prairie. It seemed a thousand years since then!

"Well, I want to git you to make one fur me." She was unrolling the bundle as she spoke and laying it in Miss Nannie's lap. But she was not quite ready yet for the details of business.

"Yaas'm, de war sho'ly has made a heap er changes," she repeated reflectively; "I cert'n'y never 'spected to see de time when Miss Nannie Trevilian would be makin' a ball-dress fur a colored lady—fur pay!"

"You have n't seen it yet!" said Miss Nannie. "You have n't got money enough to—"

"Oh, I gwineter pay you," the girl said, with a toss of her head. "I got plenty er money! Is Figinia workin', too?"

"You impudent—black—hussy!" cried Miss Nannie, hurling the words at her as if they were missiles, "*get out of here!* If you ever set foot on this place again, I 'll set the dogs on you!"

She had forgotten that the dogs, too, were gone.

Miss Maude Hubbard shot through the door with one agile bound. Her effects, in the shape of a shower of pink tarlatan and linings and spools and ribbons, followed her, to be picked up later.

Then Miss Nannie slammed the door and dropped in a passion of humiliated tears on the trundle-bed. Virginia found her thus a half-hour later.

"Oh, Virge, Virge!" she cried hysterically. "I've killed the goose that laid the golden egg!"

"Why, Aunt Nan, what in the world have you done?"

"Done? I've called a nigger an impudent black hussy! and I ought to have called her a colored lady!"

When she had made her explanation Virginia looked sober.

"I'm afraid our business is done for, Aunt Nan! But"—she drew a long breath—"it was worth it!"

That night she sewed up her shoes once more and put in an extra layer of pasteboard.

Of all these business complications Colonel Trevilian knew nothing.

"There's no use telling him," Miss Nannie had said; and his wife and daughter agreed with her.

"No. It would humiliate him beyond measure to know that the women on the place are at work and he is not," said Mrs. Trevilian. "You know how he has always felt about your doing anything, Nan,—that is, anything except about the house."

"I know," said his sister, with a half-sob; "but mercy! sister Bettie, people's ways have got to change now!—and their notions, too!"

They lived in daily, hourly hope of his finding something to do. He was familiar with legislative work; he had been representative more than once, and he had been a first-class farmer. But it is hard to find work in mid-

dle life, especially when all the old traditions and methods and institutions are tottering around one.

Colonel Trevilian, as the days went by, walked in a dazed way through the new order of things. There were government offices, but they were naturally not for one who was a Southern sympathizer. There were places enough of certain kinds, but young men were the ones sought for them. There were business openings, too, but capital was needed to make use of them. There are few greater tragedies in this world than the daily struggle for existence, especially for one who begins the struggle late.

One day, when Colonel Trevilian had gone hopefully to try for a position only to find it filled, the man said in response to a question:

"No, sir; I don't really know of a thing—not a single thing in this town that you would be likely to get—unless—" He hesitated, looked hastily at the Colonel's stately form, and then away.

"I am willing to do anything honorable, sir," said Colonel Trevilian,—"anything!"

"Well," said the man, with some embarrassment, "they say they are needing men at the prison just now."

"In what capacity, sir?" asked the Colonel, eagerly.

"As guards."

Colonel Trevilian started. He had thought he was ready for anything.

"I thank you, sir," he said at last, with difficulty. "I —I will—consider it. Yes,"—firmly,—"I will consider it, sir."

He lifted his hat with the grace of a courtier and walked slowly down the street, stumbling a little as if he were not sure of his footing.

"Poor old fellow!" the man said, looking after him and shaking his head. "That 's a sad case! He belongs to a past order."

How Colonel Trevilian considered it one knowing the traditions of his race and of his age could conjecture. But—the woodpile was nearly gone, and the mercury falling!

He walked around to where he knew a prison gang was at work. He said to himself that there would be no harm in that. It would not commit him to anything. Certainly not. He stepped rapidly until he came within sight of them. Then he moderated his pace and sauntered by, looking at them casually in passing. The guards stood gun in hand. He tried to think of himself in that position. No! No! "One might better be an overseer," he thought bitterly.

He quickened his steps. He wanted to get away—out of sight of the miserable wretches in their zebra coats. How hideous daily association with criminals must be! But—it was very cold!

He buttoned his overcoat tight around his throat, and then a minute later threw it open at the neck. Somehow, the thing choked him, and after his rapid walking he needed breath. His way was straight east. He was nearing the outskirts of the town, and the prison lay that way. At the sight of the walls he stopped.

"I don't know what I have come out here for," he said to himself. "I certainly am not going to be a prison guard! Why! it is monstrous! monstrous!"

But when he essayed to turn his steps he seemed drawn forward. Something impelled him from within. It was a lonely road. As he stumbled on, fragments of sentences fell from his lips—he did not know he was thinking aloud.

"It is very cold—and getting colder. . . . Yes, only three sticks." Then he drew himself up. "A guard, did you say?—a guard?" His lip curled in scorn. "Why, sir, she is a descendant of the cavaliers! But—the child

needs the shoes. Virginia! fatal name! . . . Well, I—I will—consider it."

It was late when he got home. He came stumblingly into the room. He felt very old—it was hard to lift his feet. What would they say? had been the burden of his thoughts. Oh, no, they would say nothing. But what would they think? how would they feel? Ah!—But what was a man to do? he asked himself, looking around fiercely.

They were all there. He had hoped to find his wife alone. She took his hat and drew him to the blazing fire.

"Come and get warm, Mr. Trevilian," she said cheerfully. "It is cold to-night." She saw that something had happened.

He sat down and held out his hands to the blaze.

"Bettie!"

She was beside him instantly. Was it Beverly?

"What is it, dear?"

"I have got work."

"You have! Oh, I am so glad! Where?"

"At the prison!"

"The prison!" she echoed.

"Yes;" he said with bitter, cutting emphasis. "I go to-morrow as a guard!"

For a moment there was dead silence. It was broken by a dismayed ejaculation from Miss Nannie.

"*Brother!*"

Mrs. Trevilian shot a swift glance of warning at her sister-in-law. Not for naught did the blood of the cavaliers course through her veins. If blue blood is not for emergencies like this, what is it for? She drew her husband's head close to her as she stood, and smoothed back the iron-gray locks. Then she sat down by him and looked with unflinching eyes into his.

"I am very, very glad," she said cheerfully. "It is not what you want, but what you can get, these days! And you 'll be a prince among guards, my dear!"

There was a ringing note of courage in her words that roused him like a clarion.

A look of ineffable relief stole over his face.

"Will it be hard work?" she asked.

He did not answer. He did not hear her. He took her hand, reddened and roughened by unaccustomed toil, and raised it to his lips. Not in the sunny days of courtship had she been so unspeakably dear to him as now.

"'A prudent wife is from the Lord,'" he said. "'Her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her. . . . She shall do him good and not evil all the days of her life.'"

"Amen!" said Miss Nannie, inaudibly.

"I wonder if I will ever have *any* sense!" she added to Virginia in the other room. "I *know* sister Bettie is the best woman in the world!"

CHAPTER XLI

CONFIRMATION STRONG

COLONEL TREVILIAN did not go as a prison guard. Before the morning came he was burning with fever and racked with pain. The exposure of the day before had been too much for him.

"It is pneumonia," the doctor said briefly, and they fought for his life.

On the sixth day he said, "The crisis is past. He will live. But, Mrs. Trevilian—"

"Yes, Doctor."

"He ought not to think of work for months. This will leave him very feeble."

They were having a consultation in the room adjoining the one in which the patient lay. Virginia sat on the bed for want of a chair. The doctor had the far-seeing eyes of a sympathetic physician, and all of his opportunities for observation. The straits of the family had not escaped his notice, though they were never obtruded upon him.

"Miss Virginia," he said abruptly, looking up from the pills he was rolling out on the reverse side of a plate, "could you teach?"

"Yes, sir."

Dr. Mayo looked at her keenly. "Have you ever taught?"

"No, sir."

"How do you know you can, then?"

"People can always do what they have to do," she answered. "I *want* to teach!"

"I know a school that wants a teacher."

"Where?" she asked eagerly.

"About seven miles from here."

"Could I get it?"

"I think so. They asked me to look out for them. But it is a country school."

"I would n't care for that. I 'm a country girl."

He had forgotten that. People always forgot it.

"They don't pay much. You would have to hunt up your scholars and take your chances about collecting. It would n't pay you more than twenty dollars a month, probably."

Twenty dollars a month seemed a small fortune to her just then.

"I 'd hunt up the scholars."

"They say there are some pretty hard boys in the school." He seemed determined to discourage her. "The last teacher was turned out. I reckon you 'd better think it over."

"Dr. Mayo," she said; "I would take them if they were Comanche Indians!"

"I reckon you will be able to hold them! How soon could you go?"

"To-day."

He looked at her with a new interest. She was plucky, certainly.

"And you raised in the lap of luxury!" he said.

"And Southern women supposed to be drones," added Miss Nannie.

"Sometimes they seem to be queen-bees," he remarked, without looking up from the roll he was chopping into little pieces to be molded into spheres.

"And sometimes they are just plain workers," said Virginia, "or want to be."

"Virginia, dear, do you think you had better try it?" It seemed a great undertaking to Mrs. Trevilian for a girl to go out into the world to earn a living. The women she had known had been used to work, but they led sheltered lives at home while doing it.

"I'm not going to 'try' it," Virginia said. "I'm going to *do* it."

Her mother looked at her wistfully. She hardly knew her daughter these days.

It was easily arranged. Dr. Mayo took her out and helped her make up her school. He knew she needed the place, and then he liked her spirit. He promised to call for her Friday afternoon. He would be out in that neighborhood, he said, and it would be on his way. He was a friend of the family, and Virginia was overwhelmed with his fatherly goodness.

If ever work was a boon,—and it has been to countless millions who have never recognized it as such,—it was to Virginia Trevilian just then. It was more than food and raiment for a needy body, it was healing for a sick soul. Ah! work is God's best gift to suffering humanity! The primal curse, "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread," has been transmuted by the divine touch into blessing.

But Mrs. Trevilian was right. Virginia was not the same light-hearted girl that had reigned "queen of the prairie"; she was not the brave one that had heartened them all in the days when they had gone forth, not knowing whither they went. She was cheery yet, when anybody was by; she was determined still, but it seemed as if something within her had died. What was it? Faith? or hope? or love?

Not love, surely. She was too young for that—her pulses were too bounding. Not hope? No, no. Hope is the very last to leave us. All else may go, but hope remains. Could it be faith? God forbid!

Whatever it was, it had come like a stroke. Virginia had gone down-town for the mail one day a few weeks after they reached Jefferson City. She had come back with a letter from Mollie Driscoll and gone off in light mood to read it. Mr. Driscoll had gone in to the nearest military post,—near enough to get occasional news from the old neighborhood. Virginia stayed a long time over the letter.

When she came in she smiled as usual at her mother, jested with Miss Nannie, and stroked her father's gray head, but it seemed to her mother's keen eyes that from that hour a part of her was gone.

In truth, no matter what she said or did, there was ever before her eyes a fragment of Mollie's letter: "You know that Chandler girl. Well, they say—"

It was the rest of it that was burned into her brain. She read Mollie's letter over till she knew it by heart.

There are degrees of guilt among scandal-mongers. Mollie would never have originated the story she retailed, but she passed it on eagerly, without a thought of verification first; and when it came to results, the difference between the two was infinitesimal.

Virginia had not heard from Gordon for weeks. She supposed rightly that it was because he did not know where they were, and she did not know where to reach him. War made everything so uncertain. She had tried hard to keep her trust; she had spurned the base accusation of Emmons Baird as she had spurned him; she had borne up against a weight of evidence; but with this letter she began to feel that it would crush her down yet. . . . The girl had been spirited away somewhere, Mollie said.

She was sitting listlessly one day in a doorway opening into the back yard. In the next room she heard her father say to her mother: "I heard something to-day that troubles me. It is about Gordon."

Virginia sat motionless, every sense alert, every muscle tense. Miss Nannie had gone down-town and they thought Virginia was with her.

It was the story told by the male gossip which had drifted down the country. It had not lost in transit, but the main features were correct. There was a beautiful golden-haired woman, a child over whom she wept, and Gordon taking her to a place of safety. With less foundation, a withering blight has fallen upon many a reputation and laid it low.

"Do you think that Virginia—"

The girl stepped softly out upon the grass, and they finished their talk alone. How glad she was she had never told them! They might conjecture all they wanted to, but they did not know!

It might have been better if they had known, for as she strayed aimlessly about the yard and garden with wretched face, and eyes that hardly saw where she was going, Colonel Trevilian was saying to his wife:

"By the Eternal! if I thought he was anything to Virginia I would search him out and *make* him tell me!"

"I hardly think there is anything between them," she said. "I used to feel almost certain that they loved each other, but for a year or more she has seemed rather indifferent about him. I should hate for her to know anything about it until the story is actually verified."

"Yes," he said. "it is a great pity for young girls to know such things—even if they exist. And, of course, if there is nothing between them it would be an impertinence for me to write to him . . . My poor old friend! I 'm glad he was under the sod before this came!"

Miss Nannie and Virginia were sitting one day sewing. It was a dress for old Aunt Silvy, and Miss Nannie was singing. The two ladies sang a good deal in those days,

—mostly hymns that breathed of trust,—for their hearts needed strengthening.

"Thus far the Lord has led me on," to the tune of "Hebron," was Mrs. Trevilian's, though she often sang softly:

"Sometimes a light surprises—"

dwelling most on the lines:

"And He who feeds the ravens
Will give His children bread."

To-day Miss Nannie was particularly downcast, so she sang lighter things—snatches of old ballads and plays and serenades. They brought back Grand Prairie days; and almost unconsciously she drifted into the swaying, rhythmical flow of:

"Oh, sister Phœbe, how merry were we
When we sat under the juniper tree!
The juniper tree, heigh-o! heigh-o!
The juniper tree, heigh-o!"

The ease with which a voice, the note of a song, the odor of a flower, can cut the cords of time and space and let our souls free seems almost like a hint of powers supernal. We were here—we are there! It has taken but a moment, but time is obliterated.

Miss Nannie was feeling this a little. There was a quaver in her voice now and then as long-vanished ones swung into view. But Virginia—ah! Virginia was under the sweet honeysuckle—its fragrance enveloped her—a deep voice was thrilling in ear and heart. . . . And she had trusted him so!

"Aunt Nan,—don't sing that, please."

Miss Nannie stopped, but did not question. They were very merciful. They knew she was hurt, but they did not probe for the ball.

It was soon after this that Virginia had an invitation to go over to Fulton, about twenty-five miles away, to visit the daughter of an old friend of her mother's. She was not very anxious to make the visit, as they were comparative strangers to her, but her mother thought it would do her good, and she went—not so much to visit Sadie Lawler as to get away from herself and the ghosts that walked.

One day they were driving through the grounds of the State Lunatic Asylum, which was located at Fulton, and was one of the lions to be exhibited. A number of the patients were out for their afternoon walk,—a dreary sight at best,—and this was a woebegone lot. Virginia could not bear to look at them. Suddenly an exclamation fell from Sadie's lips.

"Oh, Virginia! look at that pretty girl!"

Virginia turned toward them. Like a June rose among blasted plants was a fair-haired girl who looked at them with unseeing eyes. She had a rag baby pressed to her breast.

It seemed to Virginia that her breath would stop. Something seemed to be holding her throat.

"Sadie,—that looks like a girl I know! I wish we could find out something about her."

"What do you want to know? I'll ask Annie Abbot about her. Her father is one of the physicians there now."

"Find out her name, and where she is from—and—who brought her here," said Virginia, feeling her cheeks flush.

The next day Sadie reported. She had seen Annie in the meantime.

"Her name is Chandler, and she is from the western part of the State, somewhere. Annie says it is an awfully sad story. She thinks the doll is her real child,—the one she lost,—and she dresses and undresses it and puts it to bed. Is n't it pitiful! I don't think she can be older than we are."

"Pitiful! Oh-h! there are no words that can—Sadie!"

"What?"

"Did she tell you who brought her here—who supports her?"

"Oh, yes; I forgot that. It was a young Federal officer, Annie says,—a Lieutenant Lay. She said there seemed to be something rather mysterious about the case. He wanted her received under some other name than her own,—Annie did n't remember what it was,—but Dr. Smith would n't do it."

Virginia did not reply. The hand was clutching her throat again.

A day or two after she got home, Virginia went down for the mail. She liked to have the first handling of it

Two letters were handed to her—one for herself and one, in the same writing, for her father. She knew what that one was. Gordon had written her in his last letter that it was time now they were told. She held the letters in her hand and looked at them. It seemed as if her gaze might almost burn through the paper and consume its contents. This one would ask her father in courteous phrase for his daughter, promising to love, cherish, and be true to her! And this one would be filled with all the sweet assurances she had loved to hear and longed for and trusted—poor fool!

A sudden anger possessed her—an unreasoning, jealous fury that would brook no explanation, no delay.

"Some envelops, please,—large size," she was saying at the stationer's counter across the room.

She put the letters in them unopened, addressed them in a hand that did not falter, placed the stamps with scrupulous exactness, and dropped them in.

Then she went home and wept as only a woman can with the ruins of her life about her.

Looked at dispassionately, what was the motive that actuated her? Impulse? Nay, verily! her act was the logical outcome of her life and training. She had been reared in a strict school of morals; by a father who impressed upon her in a crisis of her life that character was above all; by a mother who would overthrow cherished plans to guard the virtue of a negro servant; in a religious faith which maligned and misrepresented as it has been and charged with all that is stern and forbidding, has yet unchallenged in its favor that it makes chaste men and women. The girl's whole soul was in revolt. Every instinct of her pure woman's nature cried out against the wrong that had been done,—the wrong to her as well as to the other,—and from her decision there would not be the shadow of turning.

When Mrs. Trevilian and Miss Nannie got home from the female prayer-meeting, she was lying still with a wet cloth over her eyes. It was only a headache, she said. Almost any girl can have a headache when her eyes need to be hidden.

They did not know it, but there had been a funeral that day. A beautiful form had been laid low and a tomb raised over it. On the stone was graven:

"Here lies Faith."

CHAPTER XLII

THE FORTUNES OF LOVE AND WAR

AND this is why Virginia Trevilian found work more than meat and drink that winter. She used to say afterwards that she thought she would have died if it had not been for that school; but probably not, for people seldom die except from physical causes.

There was another thing that helped her through. She came back to Poverty Hollow one Saturday afternoon with a light in her eyes such as they had not seen there for many a long day.

She had just been down-town, and she wore her new dress of mazarine blue merino, with its tiny brass buttons down the close-fitting front, and white collar and cuffs that set it off like a modern tailor-made gown. It was the one luxury she had permitted herself from her salary, for the demands were legion. To-day there was a flush on her cheeks from the bracing air, and as she stood before them the dingy room seemed suddenly bright. She looked again the "queen of the prairie."

"Guess who I've seen!"

They only looked at her, rejoiced to see the brightening of her face.

"Well, guess! It's somebody from Kansas."

"Lieutenant Tigerman," hazarded Miss Nannie.

"No. Nor Jennison—no: Lane. It is somebody you really would like to see."

"Then he wasn't from Kansas!" said Miss Nannie,

grimly. "I never want to see a living creature from Kansas again—not even a dog! I would know he was around after a bone—and would get it!"

"You are safe this time, Aunt Nan. It was Dr. Cheever.

"Dr. Cheever!" It was evident, from the simultaneous exclamation of pleasure, that some good *could* come out of Nazareth.

"What is he doing here?" asked Mrs. Trevilian.

"He is here with his regiment—the something Kansas—I forget what; but it is not the Seventh, I know that much."

"Thank the Lord!" ejaculated Miss Nannie.

They were very glad to see him when he came– it seemed like a page out of the old life.

Dr. Cheever came often to Poverty Hollow. He came sometimes on week-days, when Virginia was off leading her little band up the thorny path that leads to knowledge, but he came always on Saturday. It is undeniable that he brightened life for the girl not a little that winter, with walks and talks, and horseback rides and drives to and from her school. But it must be said that she paid the debt, for she irradiated it for him. Since he had seen her, she had passed from joyous girlhood to womanhood. She was more dignified and serious than he had thought she would ever be, but she had been through enough to sober her, he thought.

They talked much about the prairie, but only once did Dr. Cheever ask about Gordon. That he suspected anything about their previous relations Virginia could only surmise from his not asking. However, Gordon was in Kentucky when he was at Keswick, and perhaps he thought nothing about him. But one day he asked where he was, and if they ever heard from him.

No, Virginia said, she did not know where he was—

in Kansas City, she believed—they never heard from him—the war had made many changes in friendships.

He looked at her keenly. The war had n't made much difference with theirs.

One Friday afternoon, after some months of this pleasant intercourse, they were driving in from Virginia's country boarding-place. A half-mile or so from town the road over which they were passing forked—the one to the right going around the hills by circuitous windings and into Jefferson City from the east—the other, straight to town. Dr. Cheever had something to say to Virginia, for his regiment had been ordered away, and he had planned to say it not too far from the fork. Then he could take either road.

He had been preoccupied all during the drive. Virginia had most of the talking to do, and she was beginning to wonder why.

They were about a mile from the fork of the road when Dr. Cheever said almost abruptly:

"Miss Virginia, did you know that Gordon Lay and I are old acquaintances?"

"Why, no!" she said in great surprise. "Where did you know Gordon Lay? I thought you had never met."

"I know him well. At Pittsburg Landing, I believe before God, he saved my life. I was left on the field for dead, but he found me and had me cared for. They said it was n't worth while to move me. But he said it was. And he was right."

"I heard you tell about that," said Virginia, wonderingly, "but I never dreamed that it was Gordon!"

"It was. Then we were together before Corinth and got to be the best of friends. You know war sometimes makes, as well as breaks, friendships. He is a fine fellow."

"But it is so strange you did n't tell us," she said.

"I asked you about him one day, and I thought, from the way you answered, that it was not a pleasant subject to you. So I said nothing more about it. Well, a week ago I had a letter from him that I think you ought to know about."

Virginia's hands were clenched tight under the lap-robe, and her heart was throbbing as if it would burst.

"I wrote to him about you, and—"

"About me?" she cried, turning upon him. The danger-signal was fluttering in her cheeks now, and he said hastily:

"Don't be angry with me! Let me explain before you say anything at all, won't you?"

"Go on," she said, shutting her lips tight.

"When we were down there in camp we were together a great deal, Gordon and I, especially after I found who it was that had refused to let me die, and naturally we talked much about the prairie and Keswick and all of you. You know those things seem pretty close to a man when he is likely to go to the battle-field any day and not come away. He never told me whether there was anything between you or not. I often wanted to ask, but, of course, I knew he thought a great deal of you and that he got letters from you, for he did tell me that. He used to read parts of them to me where you told what the Kansas soldiers did. I knew a part of that story before it was told to me here."

Virginia sat perfectly still.

"Well, when I asked you about him you told me that you never heard from him, and I knew then that either something had come between you or that it had just been a friendly correspondence that had died out. But, Virginia.—"

Virginia started. He had never called her by her name

before. But he was too much in earnest to notice her surprise.

"—the time had come when I had to know. Gordon Lay was my friend; I owed him my life; not even for love of you would I be disloyal to him. If what had come between you was some foolish estrangement, I could not take advantage of it to ask the thing I wanted to know. But if I had been mistaken—then it was everything to me to know it. I wrote to him and asked him plainly if he had any claim upon you that I, his friend, was in honor bound to respect. Virginia, forgive me! I did it because I loved you."

She was looking straight ahead. She did not dare to turn toward him, for her eyes were brimming with tears. Oh, why were things so at cross-purposes in this world! Why could she not return the love of this man—this honorable, high-minded gentleman?

He took a letter from his breast pocket and gave it to her. She opened it slowly. It seemed ages since she had seen that writing. The letter was brief:

"In regard to the question you asked me," it said, after some expression of pleasure at hearing from him again, "I will simply say that I have no claim whatever upon Virginia Trevilian." (It seemed for a moment as if her heart stood still.) "You are as free to speak as she to answer."

That was all. She read it over three times before she spoke.

Then she turned to him with a composure that surprised herself. She almost felt that she was somebody else, and she had a strange feeling of pity for that other self.

"He is quite right," she said in an even tone; "there is nothing whatever between us."

Was it Talleyrand that said speech was given for the purpose of concealing thought?

As Virginia Trevilian spoke these words her heart was throbbing a denial and her whole soul protesting, "There is! there is!"

They were nearing the fork. The last barrier was down—and Dr. Cheever spoke.

Virginia hardly remembered afterward what he said. She tried to think the next day and could not—for pounding and pounding and pounding on the delicate nerves of hearing, above all his tender words, was Gordon's curt renunciation,—"I have no claim whatever on Virginia Trevilian."

It was true! He had no claim! He had forfeited it! She herself had severed their bonds when she returned his unopened letters in that contemptuous fashion. She would do it again! She would do it to-morrow! But—in all this wretched business, Virginia had felt that she was renouncing Gordon, and she had been upheld in it all by a stern sense of right. She was not aware that she was bolstered up by anything else. But now—for sometimes a lightning flash lays our souls bare to ourselves—she knew that the thought of Gordon's renouncing *her* had never occurred to her.

When it did, she felt bereft.

"Virginia, will you not speak to me?"

They were at the fork now. Virginia spoke—and he took the left-hand road.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE SCENT OF A HONEYSUCKLE

WHEN Dr. Cheever's regiment was ordered away, as it was soon after this, they all had a sense of loss. Poverty Hollow seemed gloomier than ever without his visits. Virginia had to fall back upon Dr. Mayo for companionship; and, really, just at this time it was more in keeping with her feelings to be with him than with a younger man.

He was her father's friend,—and he was such a good friend! He had even found Colonel Trevilian work to do when he was able to do it; he was a cultivated man of education and refinement, and was old enough for her to feel perfectly free from restraint in his presence. It rested her to talk with him, she used to say, he was so intelligent and so sensible. It was certainly a fortunate thing for her that he could stop by for her on his way home every Friday! It did not occur to Virginia to wonder at a periodicity in his patient that required a doctor's attention once a week, or to inquire whether he gave quinine for it. The truth was, she had never looked upon him in any other light than that of a valued family friend.

Her intercourse with him was a tonic to her, and Virginia needed a tonic. She learned to look forward to those rides, and was almost her old self as she chatted at his side or talked seriously to him of life's deeper things. It gave him a marvelous opportunity to see her at her best.

And Dr. Mayo was a widower.

One Friday in the spring, when the trees were putting on their first green and the maples were still in old rose, Colonel Trevilian came out for her. They were half-way home before she knew what had really brought him.

"My daughter," he said, after a pause in the conversation, "I want to talk with you about a matter that is very near my heart. Will you hear me patiently until I am through?"

She looked at him wonderingly.

"Why, certainly, father. Anything that is near your heart is near mine, too."

"It is not about myself, Virginia. It is about you."

"About me? What is it?"

"Virginia, Dr. Mayo is a very dear friend of mine. I knew him when I was in the legislature—knew him well. He is a man of sterling worth."

"I know it, father. And he has been so good to me this winter. He is the dearest man!"

"I am very glad to know you feel so. It makes it easy to say what is on my heart. Virginia, Dr. Mayo has asked my permission to address you."

"Father!"

The cry broke from her as if she had been wounded. Her first feeling was one of bitter loss; the next, a strange repulsion.

"Yes. He would not speak to you until he knew he had my consent. It is a custom I like. It guards a woman from unwelcome suitors."

Virginia did not answer. She was thinking with poignant remembrance of a certain youthful love whose exuberance did not wait for stately conventionalities or go-betweens.

"Virginia, in years past I—had hoped—" he spoke hesitatingly—he knew he was on thin ice—"in fact, Dr. Lay and I—had spoken together about—"

"It will never be, father."

"Ah! I thought perhaps you might feel so. I am not sure but you are right—and yet—Gordon was a manly boy—I can hardly think—"

"We won't talk about it, father, please. I don't want to go away from you and mother. Why should I? You are not tired of me, are you?"

He drew her to him. "My dear child!"

They did not talk for a few moments. Then he said:

"It is because of my love for you, Virginia, that I want to see you in some good man's home. It has been much on my heart during my months of illness. I felt that I could not die and leave you unprovided for."

"Father, I am happy teaching."

He shook his head. "It is not the natural way, my child. God never intended woman for the bread-winner. Her whole constitution and the bent of her affections proclaim that she was made for the home. You did nobly in taking up the burden that your father had to lay down, but it is not the right way—it is not Nature's way. A woman should have a man's strong arm to lean on. I would not try to force your affections, my child; but I should be glad to see you provided for. These last few months have made me feel the uncertainties of life so! And Dr. Mayo is a good man. As mistress of his home—"

"Father, don't talk to me any more about it now. I want to stay with you and mother."

"Well, well! I only wanted to prepare you for it and tell you how I felt. I should hate to see you spend your life in the school-room, my child. And Dr. Mayo is a fine man."

The seed dropped that day was left to germinate. The doctor had the wisdom to keep away from Poverty Hollow for a while. When he did speak to her about it he

was very gentle. She should have all the time she wanted to decide, he said. And Virginia stipulated that for two months it should not be referred to between them.

Miss Nannie was the doctor's open ally.

"I 'm never going to marry anybody," said Virginia to her, one day, as they sat together. "I 'm going to be a dear, sweet old maid like you, Aunt Nan, and live with Beverly, and be another mother to his children, as you have been to us."

"Virginia," said Miss Nannie, seriously, "I want a better fate for you than an old maid's life. Not that I have n't been content, child, for I have; but—a solitary life is always more or less a lonely one."

"Aunt Nan, have you been lonely?"

"Hardly lonely. But, Virginia, I will say to you what I have never said to any living soul before, and would n't to-day under any other circumstances. A woman is always lonely, in a way, who does not feel herself the supreme object of somebody's affection. She may not acknowledge it, but that does not change the fact. I have been blessed beyond most solitary women. I have never been made to feel my dependence. I have never felt that I was alone. But—in whose affections am I first?"

"Aunt Nan, you know how we all love you!" cried Virginia, reproachfully.

"I do know. I 'm not complaining. But, Virginia, it never quite satisfies a woman's heart to be second. Don't forget that. And if she has not husband and children she must be."

They sat in silence a moment, and then Miss Nannie said impulsively:

"Virge, I 'm old enough now to say what I please. That 's one nice thing about getting old—and about the only one I know of—and I 'm going to do it. There is in every woman's heart that which cries out for the close,

intimate companionship of some other soul. They may say it is n't so, but it is. And that is n't all. Deep down in every true woman's heart is a longing for the touch of little hands. Nothing else satisfies the mother instinct within her. You hear people talk sometimes as if they thought this was immodest. Immodest! It is the holiest feeling of a woman's nature! But if an unmarried woman dares to express it she is called a love-sick old maid! So they simply stifle the feeling and try to live it down. *I* know!"

"Aunt Nan," said Virginia, wonderingly, "I never knew you felt that way."

"No, of course not. I don't go around proclaiming my deepest feelings from the house-tops. I only say it to you now because I don't want you to get the notion in your head of being an old maid. I know they are useful. I certainly am not decrying old maids. But, honey, I don't want you to be one! I want you to have the fullest possible life, and that will not be in Beverly's home, but in your own. There is something in being the mistress of your own establishment. It gives you a place in the world that nothing else does. Oh, yes; I know that is a secondary thing,—but it is something."

Virginia did not seem specially responsive, and Miss Nannie looked at her keenly.

"Virginia, there is one thing I want to ask you."

"Don't do it, Aunt Nan. I would n't answer you."

"Honey, you are sure it never will be?"

"Never!"

"Then think seriously of this other. You like Dr. Mayo. That feeling may grow into something deeper and stronger. And I will give you another piece of old maid's wisdom. Girls sometimes let good opportunities for marriage go by, expecting some Prince Charming to appear, till it is too late."

"Too late?"

"Yes, too late. You girls never seem to understand that there is a seed-time in love as in other things,—and that time is in the spring!"

As the weeks went by, Virginia pondered deeply over the question she was to answer. She liked Dr. Mayo. He was never tiresome to her, and that was a good deal. Of course he was much older,—old enough, in fact, to be her father,—but he was genial and companionable, and he was not exacting. He was willing to give much and take little,—so little, indeed, that she felt almost ashamed to think what a one-sided thing it would be. From the depths of her heart she respected him. Would that in time grow into a calm semblance of love? And if it did, would she be satisfied? and would he?

She sat down one day in her mother's lap and put her head on the shoulder that had sustained her in her childish trials.

"Momsie, you are the only one that is n't trying to get rid of me. What would *you* do?"

Mrs. Trevilian held her close.

"Follow your own heart, my child. You may be sure that will never take you wrong."

Virginia had a letter one day from Sallie, who was still in Kentucky, telling about Gordon's being stationed near them and their seeing so much of him. At the close of the letter she wrote:

"Virge, what did you do to Gordon? He won't tell me, but I know you did something. He has been very attentive to Mary Matterson, who is quite a belle. Everybody thinks they are engaged, but I 'm sure I don't know."

Virginia put on her prettiest dress that evening when Dr. Mayo came. He never saw her brighter or more beautiful. There was a deferential gentleness in his man-

ner to her that touched her heart to-night as it had never done before. Under all her gaiety that heart was a little sore. A wound cannot be jarred too rudely when the bandage is just taken off.

The very night before her probation ended Virginia and Miss Nannie were out walking. High Street was abloom with roses and syringas and all the rest. They were not talking much. Miss Nannie had said weeks ago all she had to say. But the time for the verdict was at hand and Virginia was summing up the arguments. It was such a comfort to be with Aunt Nan and not have to talk.

They passed an old-fashioned, double brick house with sharp dormers in front. Over the porch was a sweet-scented honeysuckle. The air was heavy with its perfume.

There is something about an odor more than anything in the world that brings back old memories. For one brief instant, Virginia closed her eyes. The lights were gleaming from open casements, the music of familiar voices reached her ear, and the soft tread of shuffling feet; the promenaders paced back and forth; and under the honeysuckle a tall man held a girl's beating heart to his.

She drew a quivering breath.

"I can't do it, Aunt Nan!" she said.

CHAPTER XLIV

WITHOUT FEAR AND WITHOUT REPROACH

WAS it the honeysuckle? or was it the force of a great heart, hundreds of miles away, that held and drew her periodically to itself, as the moon holds and draws—in spite of all—the restless, heaving, turbulent ocean?

That heart, though sorely wounded, was unchanged. This was the love of a lifetime to Gordon Lay; in it was what the author of "Tess" calls "a substratum of everlastingness."

And yet in a heart where burns a steady flame of love that nothing can put out, sometimes smolders also a slow fire of resentment that is as hard to quench. The very traits that make the one possible, make the other almost inevitable.

Gordon felt, not unnaturally, that he had been hardly used. To the astonished bewilderment of that first moment when his letters had dropped unopened into his hands had succeeded a period of searching self-examination. What had he done? He knew Virginia too well to believe that this was a girl's whim—she was not unreasonable—something had shaken her soul to its depths to lead her to do a thing like this. But what was it? And how could he ever find out? In those letters was the explanation of his long silence, of his unprecedented and, perhaps, unwarrantable action in taking charge of Colonel Trevilian's affairs—of everything, in short. But if these explanations did not reach the eyes for which they were intended, how could he ever right himself in their

sight? And how could he *make* them reach those eyes? The more he thought of it the more dazed he felt, and the more perplexed as to the means of extrication.

Then a slow anger rose within him. A common criminal was allowed a trial,—and with those letters that would have explained everything thrown contemptuously back at him, he felt that he had been denied a trial—he had been condemned unheard.

He really was more troubled over the return of Colonel Trevilian's letter than Virginia's. It might possibly be personal pique on her part,—though he hardly believed so,—but it would not be on the Colonel's. It must be that he had heard of his action in taking Lois to the asylum and resented it. Perhaps the superintendent had learned where Colonel Trevilian was and communicated with him, telling him of his (Gordon's) proposition to have her entered under the name of Trevilian, and he had felt it to be an unpardonable liberty with his name. Perhaps they resented his taking Lois there, or his having anything to do with it. But—he told himself helplessly —something had to be done, and there was nobody else to do it. They ought to know that his motives were right, whether his judgment was or not.

He began to feel sure that he had come upon the true solution. Colonel Trevilian repudiated this marriage and resented his action in the matter, and Virginia stood with him.

Then pride and a sense of injury came to complicate matters. If this was the way they felt, he had overestimated the family—that was all!

His regiment was ordered to Kentucky after a while, and he talked it all over with his mother,—asking specially that Sallie should not be told anything about it. He did not want to be mixed up in it any more than he

was already, he said, and Sallie would be sure to let fall something about it to Virginia. And in the wisdom of this Mrs. Lay concurred,—so the last hope of straightening things out was cut off.

Mrs. Lay took a very common-sense view of Gordon's obligation in the matter,—influenced perhaps by mother-love.

"My son," she said, "I don't think you ought to burden yourself in any such way. If Colonel Trevilian repudiates this marriage, or is not able to maintain her, Lois should be put on the county."

"Mother," he replied quietly, "that was settled months ago. While I live, Beverly Trevilian's wife will never become a public charge."

"But, Gordon, there is certainly some misunderstanding. I would n't give it up this way—and when you write again—"

"I shall not write again," he said.

It was during this time in Kentucky that he met Mary Matterson, of whom Sallie afterward wrote to Virginia. He did not go much into society, but Mary Matterson was a sweet, attractive girl, and he went often to her house. She was a belle, as Sallie had said; but there was something about this reserved, quiet man that interested her more than any of her gay companions. And he found her companionship very grateful at this time.

Word came to them at last that the news of Beverly's death had reached the Trevilians—came in a heart-broken letter from Virginia to Sallie, which she put into Gordon's hands.

"Gordon," she cried through her tears, "what was it came between you and Virge? . . . Write to her, whatever it was. . . . She needs comfort now."

He read the letter through and handed it back to her.

But he did not answer, and he did not write. In all the letters of sympathy that passed there was never a mention of the marriage.

One day Gordon had a letter from Dr. Cheever. It was written with a longing for a friend's sympathy, and perhaps, too, with the unformulated thought that Gordon would understand. He told him in the letter what she had said—the assurance he had waited for before he had spoken—"There is nothing whatever between us."

Gordon sat staring into vacancy a long time after he read this letter. It seemed to make it all so horribly definite. . . . This is a mixed-up world. He did not know that her words were only an echo of his own, that had fallen on her heart like clods on a coffin.

After a while his eyes fell on another letter lying on his table. He took it up and looked at it. He knew what it was. It seemed almost like the satire of fate that it should have come at this moment when he was looking out over the desolation of his life.

It was a bill for Lois Chandler's board and medical attendance, rendered quarterly. With it was a brief statement of her condition, which the superintendent said was unchanged. Gordon had deposited a sum of money in the Fulton bank—in case of emergency. He wrote out a check for the amount, added a formal line with it, and addressed it mechanically. He was thinking of the day he stood under the willow tree with Beverly Trevilian's letter in his hand.

"The covenant was with Jonathan and his house," he said, unaware that he had spoken. . . . His mother was well provided for—she would never leave his sister now; and—wifeless and childless as he felt at this moment he should always be—what better use could he make of his broken life than to give it to the care of his dead friend's wife and child?

"I can, at any rate, be faithful," he thought; but it was a wintry smile that flitted over his face, for a principle is a bloodless thing, and human love so warm and palpitating!

And so it stood between these two until the hour of reckoning came.

CHAPTER XLV

A DAY IN JUNE

IT was a royal day in June. The skies were bluer, the grass more green, the very roses fuller and sweeter than they had been for four long years,—for it was a June of peace. The birds were holding a carnival over it, and all nature sang in the chorus. These four years had been a night of mad delirium,—but the dawn had come. Men woke with spent bodies and racked nerves, it is true, but with vision clearer than it had been for many a day. And as the morning brightened, a thrill of life began stirring in their veins.

When the end came with Appomattox, Colonel Trevilian accepted it with stoical philosophy.

"We have 'fought a good fight,'" he said to Dr. Mayo, who was a Union man; "we 'have kept the faith' delivered to us by our fathers, but the logic of events is against us, and we yield to it."

There was something in the attitude of the conquered that could not but appeal to the conqueror. They had staked all and lost, but they did not whine. There are few things in history braver or more pathetic than the way in which the Southern people took up life again when the war was over. They were impoverished and decimated; their lands were laid waste; their pleasant places destroyed by fire; thorns and briers sprang up where the fruitful field had been; the fallow ground cried out for the husbandman, and the strong man was laid low; those that remained were unused to labor, and their

social structure was in ruins around them. But men and women bent their backs to the burden and did not complain.

It is not strange, perhaps, that here and there one should see occasional souls who, in the midst of the fiery furnace that followed war, should still have been "unreconstructed." It is always easier for the victor to forget than for the vanquished, and there are some wounds that need time's healing touch.

All over the country, that June, people were taking up the tangled threads of life and trying to straighten them out. They seemed hopelessly twisted sometimes.

On the border the land at least was left, and Jackson County land—with youth and hope—is a fortune to any possessor. But too often, alas! youth was gone, and hope—ah, well, happily hope is a perennial! It goes down before the sharp frosts of winter, but its tender leaves rear themselves bravely again when the first sunny days come; there always seems to be some warmth where its roots are hidden.

It seemed to Colonel Trevilian, when the tidings of Beverly's end reached him, that youth and hope had been cut down together, but by the time this June of peace had come he remembered that Virginia was left. And with the thrilling of life in nature came the throbbing of the old desires for home and the mastery of the earth.

Virginia and her father had set June first for their return to spy out the land and see what could be done toward building up the waste places. They had talked much about it. Even Sallie, away off in Kentucky, knew of that date and all it portended. She was as eager to get back as they, but she must wait a while—till Ike Swamscott could get a start and come on for her. The war did not blast quite all hopes. Those having their roots in hearts that still beat sprang up again.

Colonel Trevilian and Virginia stood on the platform of a Missouri Pacific station. A friend's buggy was to convey them to Grand Prairie, and the friend stood urging his hospitality upon them. They did not quite have all things in common as in apostolic times, but the returning exiles had a helping hand extended from every side. A family camping for the night by the roadside in '65 sent to a neighboring farm-house one morning for milk. The messenger came back with pans of hot biscuits and a generous dish of ham and eggs. The housewife had given up her own breakfast and was cheerfully cooking another.

"I have just got back myself," was the message she sent, "and I know how it is!"

The two were in the buggy, ready for the start, when a young man, tall and erect, rode up on an iron-gray. His face was bronzed from exposure, but it was a clean face, well chiseled. They were not eyes that need fall before the most searching gaze. They did not now. They bent fearlessly upon the young woman in the buggy, whose color came and went.

"Why, it 's Gordon Lay!" exclaimed Colonel Trevilian, heartily, extending his hand. "Well met, my boy, well met! It is a lucky chance that brings us together here!"

"It is lucky indeed for me," said Gordon, shaking hands cordially with both. He emphasized the pronoun rather more than the adjective, which was only honest, seeing that he had been hanging around the station for the last twenty-four hours. Sallie had written him that they would be there on the first, but he had decided to take no chances of premature arrival. He seemed as much surprised, however, as they were at the meeting.

He was going out to the old place, he said, to look it over and see what could be done with it. No,—in answer

to the Colonel's question,—he hardly thought his mother would ever want to come back. The associations were painful, and she would be happier, he thought, with his sister. He did not say what he was going to do with the place.

He rode along by the side of the buggy, first on one side, and then on the other. But he talked almost always to the Colonel. The garrulity of years is a convenience sometimes, and a safeguard.

The friend's bays trotted briskly along the smooth, level prairie road. Colonel Trevilian felt his spirits rising as he looked across the great stretch. Not even the spectral chimneys outlined here and there against the sky could keep down the joy that rose in his heart at the sight of the old familiar landmarks. He was going home—and he had been so homesick for his farm! It was good to hear the bob-whites once more!

"Gordon," he said, "that 's a fine riding-horse you have there. I have been noticing his gaits. That is n't the one you were riding the day you saved Virginia, is it?"

"Yes, sir; it 's the same one." Virginia blushed, and Gordon bent over the horse's neck to pat him. "He 's done me good service, sir. He carried me all through the war. We 've seen some hard times together, Damon and I. He fairly stands on his hind heels when he hears a bugle or a drum."

"He 's a fine animal," repeated the Colonel, admiringly. "I hardly know how it would seem to be in the stirrups again."

"Would you like to try it, sir?" Gordon asked eagerly. "I 'll change with you if you 'd like."

Virginia sat in quiescence. Her permission to this arrangement had not been asked. Apparently, she was not considered in it.

When the change was made, the Colonel rode off briskly, the blood coursing in his veins faster than it had done for years. It was not running slowly in Gordon's veins, if heart-beats were any indication. He was afraid Virginia would see them.

"Yes," he repeated; "Damon has done me good service." In his heart he was thinking, "And never better than just now."

His manner put her instantly at ease. The old familiar boy-and-girl footing was established between them without a word. He talked to her about her mother, her school, her life in Jefferson, Sallie, and the rest of the boys and girls,—everything except the one thing nearest his heart. She said to herself, "He has forgotten. I am so glad!"—and, by a strange contrariety of woman nature, said it with an inward sob imperceptible to the ears of sense.

They were talking at last of Beverly's death. He listened for some word that would tell him she knew of the marriage, but none came. It was all about "brother," and the pity of it. Nothing about "brother's wife," and the pity of that. He did not want to enter upon that story, he felt a strong shrinking from it, for he knew it would hurt her. But they were nearing home now. He could not let her drop into that tragedy wholly unprepared.

"Virginia," he said, reining the horses in to a walk. They had passed Colonel Trevilian, who had stopped to talk with an acquaintance on the road. "How much do you know about Beverly? What have you heard?"

It was painfully abrupt. He knew it, but he did not know how to soften it.

She looked at him uncomprehendingly.

"How much do I know?" she repeated. "Why, we don't know anything much of the details. Mr. Force heard Mammy tell about his death when she was at the

provost's in Independence once. He said she asked some of them to send us word, and he did as soon as he found out where we were. But that was not till a long time afterward. You know, Mammy and Uncle Reuben can't write, and there was hardly anybody left that they could get to write for them."

He was listening intently. Evidently, she did not know.

"Why did you ask?" she asked suddenly.

"Virge," he said very gently, dropping into the old name unconsciously, "are you strong enough and brave enough to bear up under something I have to tell you?"

She looked at him with dilating eyes. "What is it? Tell me quickly!"

"Beverly was married."

"Married! Brother? No!"

"He was married."

"To whom?"

"To Lois Chandler."

Lois Chandler! It seemed to the girl that the blood was leaving even her heart. The hand clutched her throat frightfully.

"Where is Lois Chandler?" she asked.

"In the asylum at Fulton. It is a sad story. The night Beverly was buried his child was born. The mother has been insane ever since."

Beverly's child! She raised her hand to her throat and pulled at her collar. It did seem as if she would suffocate.

"Who took her to the asylum?" she asked in a tense voice.

"I did. There was no one else to do it, and I felt that she must have treatment. I know it seems almost unjustifiable, but this is my warrant for doing it."

He took Beverly's letter from his pocket and put it into her hands. She read it through twice.

"Why were we not told of this before?" she asked as she gave it back to him. Her voice was strained and unnatural. He felt that he was being arraigned.

He folded it up and put it away before he answered. When he did, his voice was absolutely without trace of emotion.

"I wrote your father about it and inclosed a letter that Beverly had left for him. . . . It was returned to me."

A piece of paper that had caught in the wheel went around again and again and again. She watched for its revolutions with fascinated eyes that were not consciously looking at it. In her brain was throbbing tumultuously the thought: "This is the man I doubted!" And deep down in her heart there was running an undercurrent from Sallie's letter: "Everybody thinks they are . . . I 'm sure I don't know."

"Virginia," he said, "I hope I have not done wrong to tell you this. I felt that you must know it first, for your father's sake."

She looked up at him with a face whose white wretchedness haunted him for days. He longed to take her in his arms and comfort her, but he did not so much as touch her hand.

"No!" she said, with slow emphasis that he did not fathom then. "No! You have done nothing wrong. Nothing! You have been all that is good and true!"

He raised his hand deprecatingly. "I could not have done less. Beverly left her to me. And—I loved him like a brother.'"

They could hear Damon's hoof-beats behind them. The Colonel would soon be there.

"Gordon," she said hastily, "where is the child? Did it live?"

"Yes. Mammy has it. He is a beautiful boy, Vir-

"Yes!" he said brokenly, "God forgive me! Yes!"

ginia. We will see him in a few minutes. He is Beverly's image.'"

"I must tell father," she gasped. "The shock would be too much for him. Give me the letter."

He slipped it into her hand and reined up his horses.

"Now, Colonel," he said cheerfully, "if you will change, I will ride on ahead and tell Mammy you are coming."

As the Colonel was dismounting, Gordon bent over Virginia. "You 've been a brave girl!" he whispered. "Be brave still!" The tenderness of his voice thrilled her.

UNDER the willow Gordon finished the story. It was hard for the proud-spirited old man to accept it. "And he a Trevilian!" he said.

"He died as a Trevilian should, sir," Gordon answered firmly. "He came to her in her hour of need. He was faithful unto death."

Mammy was coming across the garden with a white-robed figure in her arms. Virginia was beside her. They had kept the child out of sight purposely until now. "Give him time," Gordon had said.

The two women stood beside them, without a word. Colonel Trevilian looked up and started,—he was so like Beverly! But he did not reach out his arms. He could not bring himself to that yet.

"Honey," said Mammy, pointing to the Colonel, "who is dat?"

"My—dan'pa," lisped the child.

"Tell grandpa who you is."

"Li'l'—Bev'ly," he said, stumbling a little over the name, but triumphant at last.

"Whose little Beverly is you, honey?" asked Mammy, the tears rolling down her cheeks.

"Dan'pa's li'l'—Bev'ly," replied the baby, with the slow, cautious speech of a child learning to talk. He had long been tutored for this hour.

"Is you hyeah dat, Marse William? Gord done give you another chile!"

Colonel Trevilian sat by his son's grave, one hand covering his face, which worked convulsively. Mammy put the child on his feet, and he went fearlessly to his grandfather. With his baby fingers he pulled at the hand. Mammy often played with him thus.

"Don't c'y!" he said, tugging at the fingers. "Here 's —li'l' Bev'ly! Is you my dan'pa?"

The old man strained him to his breast.

"Yes!" he said brokenly. "God forgive me! yes!"

CHAPTER XLVI

THE DOVE'S CALL

WITHIN the next few days the wheels of life began to revolve on Grand Prairie, slowly and with some jerks, for a good many cogs were missing and the bearings had not been oiled for a long time, but with motion enough to show that some day, when the gearing was in order, it would go again.

Colonel Trevilian and Uncle Reuben planned together for the fields,—Mammy and Virginia for the housing of them all. Gordon, on his own place, was busy battling with the horse-weeds that had grown up around the house like a thicket of underbrush. They were arduous days of making bricks without straw; but, for all that, they were not without their compensation. A community of interests (and of privations as well) brings us close to one another.

As evening drew on, Gordon would come back to Keswick, as they still called the ruins, and he and the Colonel and Virginia would sit on the stone steps that had once led up to the porch, and lean against the pillars where the "queen of the prairie" was trying its best to hide the scars of war and the "Baltimore belle" hung heavy with its seven-fold clusters. Roses can do such a mighty work in brightening the face of desolation.

And then, when the Colonel got sleepy and went off to the loom-house, there were always several hours of moonlight left, and Gordon leaned against his pillar beside the "queen of the prairie," and Virginia against hers under

the " Baltimore belle," and it seemed very easy and natural to fall into the old ways of friendly talk. But it was never anything more. Between them always was the length of the step and a great gulf fixed. In Virginia's heart was still reverberating, " Everybody says they are. . . . I am sure I don't know," and in his was the ever recurring question which was never answered—" Why? "

In all these days he had not asked her one word as to why his letter had been returned. If he had meant to punish her, he could have devised no more stinging way. If he would only ask her about it! she would think. But he was too proud to ask. What she had done had been unprovoked; what she might do would be unsolicited. And of course her lips were sealed.

She had never asked him about the Kentucky girl, though it had trembled on her lips a hundred times. She had talked around it and given him every opportunity to tell her, but he never had taken her into his confidence. Again and again she had said to herself, " I will ask him about it sometime, just in a friendly way—we are friends, if nothing more "; but whenever she started to do it the hand always clutched her throat and she could not get the words out. It was all she could do to breathe when that hand had her.

He asked her one day to drive over to his home with him,—there was something he wanted a woman's taste about.

Colonel Trevilian was going back the next day, but it had been decided to leave Virginia here with Mammy and Uncle Reuben to get the school-house in readiness for the home-coming. That was to be the shelter for the present. Sometime, perhaps, Keswick might be rebuilt, but not now. There was fencing to be made, and stock to buy, and plows and harrows and reapers and mowers and corn-planters and wagons to be supplied be-

fore the house could be thougnt of. In the meantime, whitewash was cheap. Many a Jackson County farmer who had lived in luxury before the war was glad now of a shelter and a bucket of whitewash. They used it freely —even on the tree trunks.

Gordon Lay had had a little talk with Colonel Trevilian the day before. He had asked him some plain questions. There were some things he felt that he had to understand. Things could not go on this way forever.

It was the first time Virginia had been over to his home. At Keswick the occupancy of the two old negroes had kept the place in partial order, but at Dr. Lay's there was nothing left but the house and the trees. Even the grass was rooted up by swine, and the weeds stood high as a man's head around the house. They had to bend them aside to reach the door.

They went through the house together. It was forlorn enough, but—it could be made into a home, Virginia was thinking with a dull aching at her heart. It was the Kentucky girl that would do it.

They went out after a while into the yard, down in the corner where the locusts were and the swine had not plowed. A seat, scarred like Whittier's desk with the "jackknife's carved initials," had been placed years before between two trees. "V. T." was on it, and "B. C. T.," and "Sallie," and "G. L.," in all varieties of type. They sat down on this seat and looked back at the house.

"It is rather a gloomy outlook," he said, cutting a locust sprout and slowly snipping the leaves away. "I am afraid it will never be anything more than a house again."

"It will," she answered quickly. "She 'll make it into a home for you. Sallie told me, Gordon. I was in hopes you would confide in me yourself, but—it 's all right. And—I—want to say that I am very glad for you."

She hurried a little, for she felt the hand creeping

toward her throat, and she would not have broken down for a kingdom.

"Thank you," he said gravely. "How much did Sallie tell you?"

"Only her name and that she was a great belle."

"Ah! And do you believe, Virginia, that she would be willing to go with me into this desolate place?"

"It will not be desolate to her when you are here," she said gaily. Her heart was bleeding, but she would not let him see the drops. She could bind it up at her leisure.

He raised his hat with grave courtesy.

"You are kind to say so. And Sallie!—well, Sallie's kindness I shall never forget!"

She looked at him with surprised eyes.

"I am sure I can only conjecture as to Sallie's motives," he continued. "Doubtless, when we get down to them they will prove truer than her facts. They certainly could not be more false." (In reality, Sallie's thought in writing that news had been, "I 'll just make Miss Virginia see how it feels!") "No,—there is only one woman in all the world, Virginia, that could make a home for me here or anywhere, and—I 've lost her."

Her broad-brimmed hat had fallen back, leaving her face bare to his gaze, and he was looking steadily at her. A crimson tide spread over neck and cheek and brow and then receded Her eyes were on the ground.

"I don't know what I did," he said gently. It was his gentleness that broke her heart. "But I know she was not the girl to do what *she* did without a reason. Sometime, perhaps, I shall know. Sometime, perhaps, she will tell me. Until then I can wait."

There was a moment of painful silence. It was stirred, not broken—for a dove's moan seems the very embodiment of solitude—by a plaintive note down in the pasture, —the sweetest, mournfulest cry in all bird-lore

"Poor fellow!" he said. "He 's lost his mate. Listen! he 's calling for her."

She flashed a quick smile of recollection at him through her tears. It was what they used to say as children.

Just then there came from far away an answering call —so faint, so low it could hardly be heard, but thrilling with the same sad burden of love and longing.

She put her hand out toward him with a quick gesture. Her chin quivered a little—she could not quite hold her voice steady, but she met his look bravely.

"Perhaps—they 've just—got separated," she said softly. "Listen! She 's calling for him, too! Can you hear?"

It was a faint cry, but he heard.

CHAPTER XLVII

A CHAPTER OF BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

ONE by one the lights began to twinkle over Grand Prairie,—in the cabins sometimes, or in little shanties near where the chimneys stood,—sometimes in the shell of the house that was. Then pioneer life began again,—and the people were very close to one another in their poverty. The story of that coming back is almost as touching in its way as the tragical one of their deportation two years before. There is something very pathetic about the beginnings of middle life or old age.

But there is one beautiful trait in human nature. As time rolls on, we forget the disagreeable and hard things of life and remember the pleasant and humorous ones. We cannot help it. Our souls are fashioned that way. He who made them knew that the burden of all our sorrows would be intolerable. And so it is that when a company of those exiles get together now, they always speak of the ridiculous figure they cut, and the funny incidents of the journey, and the helping hands that were held out to them on their return, and not of the woes of it all. These make only the shadows of the picture that serve to bring out the high lights,—and distance has thrown such a haze over it, and the whole has been so softened by time, that it seems now more a dramatic incident in a play than the sharp reality it was forty years ago.

In those trying days of beginning again they labored together to build up the walls, and, as in the days of Ne-

hemiah, every man repaired over against his own house.

The similitude to the exiled Jews did not end here, for the years following peace were far from peaceful years along the border. It might almost have been said of them as of the house of Judah: "They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, . . . every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon."

The passions of men cannot be wrought up to fever heat through years of marauding and violence and bloodshed to be calmed instantaneously by executive decree. War began early for the border,—full half a decade before the deluge came,—and it did not end with the proclamation of peace. For years there were occasional wild bursts of outlawry that could be traced to Quantrell's band. The James boys got their start then.

On the other side of the line were ruffians who had been trained in the same school. That they should immediately settle down into good and reputable citizens was almost too much to expect of frail human nature. A taste of pillage is to the human tiger as a taste of blood to his brother in the jungle. It whets his appetite for more. So it is hardly to be wondered at that along the harried border peace should have been a "work" rather than an "act," as the catechism has it.

A few of the old families never returned, but their places were taken in time by enterprising farmers who, during the war, had seen this "garden of the Lord," and returned to occupy it. But most of them came back sooner or later, for there is a drawing force about the prairie as about the mountains or the sea, to those who have lived upon it, which gets into the blood and brings one back to it.

Sometimes it was only the young people that came,

as in the case of the Lays; and sometimes, alas! it was only the older ones that were left to come.

Miss Tiny and Miss Tony never returned. Before peace came they had both had free transportation to greener fields than are to be found in Jackson County or even in their own loved Virginia. True, it was "beyond the swelling flood," but they had been through such deep waters before that when they came to the great river it seemed but a friendly stream which would give them passage to the "land of pure delight."

Sallie came back one day with Ike Swamscott and her mother, and it seemed to Mrs. Trevilian and Mrs. Devereau that they were beginning life over again in their daughters. There is something a little sad in seeing one generation step aside for another, but it is nature's law. And, perhaps, after all, it is the easiest way for us to understand how "immortality is brought to life," for so it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.

In a quiet ward of the asylum at Fulton a fair-haired woman with childish blue eyes and a peach-blossom complexion walks up and down the long hall. Pressed to her breast is a formless child whose garments are fashioned with care, but never need shortening. Among those withered ones whose springs of intelligence have been tapped and the joy-giving waters taken thence, she looks strangely out of place. Even the dull eyes look after her and light up as she passes. She is like a gleam of sunlight in a place of shadows. But it is sunlight falling on ice. It is beautiful, but it does not vivify.

The doctor is passing through. She comes to him and says wistfully, as she has said with each revolving sun:

"Will Beverly come to-day?"

"Not to-day," the doctor tells her gently,—"to-morrow, perhaps."

"Oh! to-morrow. Well, I can wait one more day, Doctor,"—with a pathetic little attempt at courage. And it is to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow! And he for whom she waits sleeps peacefully under the willow. Ah! God sometimes mercifully takes from us memory and leaves us hope!

"A sad case!" the doctor says as they pass on. "One of the wrecks of war! She saw her father shot down, and buried her husband with her own hands at a time when she needed tenderest care. Yes, quite hopeless, I think. But the doll-baby is a comfort to her."

And if the semblance of humanity can so feed the springs of maternal love which bubbled up for one brief space and thus took hold upon eternity, what could not be done by a sentient soul?

As water in a thirsty land, so is the love of a child to parched and withering lives. Upon the blighted hopes, the blasted plans, the purposes broken off, little Beverly laid a baby's touch, and, lo! the barren wastes were covered with budding flowers and spring verdure.

The child crept into his grandsire's heart and brought with him a throbbing of the old ambitions. This was Beverly come back to him. His name had not died out. Life was not quite all gone yet. Could Keswick ever be restored for his grandson? It was worth striving for.

The boy never knew he was motherless. Three women took him to maternal hearts,—one for love of the son who slept, one in place of the child that had never been, and one because he had lain first of all on her faithful breast. Each gave him love in unstinted measure. And so, by a beautiful compensation that we do sometimes see in life, there was made up to him a loss that he never realized.

Relations were established with Miss Abby Cheever in the strangest possible manner,—one that could leave no

doubt in their minds about the kindliness of her feeling for them, or her sense of justice.

She had been living in Lawrence since she left the prairie; she had gone unscathed through the massacre and still taught school, supplementing her earnings by giving music-lessons. One day she had a note from a lady in the outskirts of the town requesting her to call. She wished her daughter to begin taking lessons on the piano.

Miss Abby went immediately. Pianos were a scarce article in Kansas then; she often had to substitute a melodeon. And then the name interested her,—Tigerman was a peculiar name, she had never heard it except on Grand Prairie.

When she entered Mrs. Tigerman's parlor, into which she was ushered by her prospective pupil, a strange sense of familiarity stole over her. Where had she seen a Wilton carpet like this? and this Chickering piano?

Over the mantel hung a portrait in oil of a stately, gray-haired gentleman. Miss Abby was standing before it when the lady of the house appeared.

When she turned to meet her hostess, that lady had a vague feeling that she had seen her caller before—where, she could not tell. She did not associate her at all with the stranger in the Trevilian pew. Four years—and such years!—had left their imprint even upon Miss Abby, and then Mrs. Tigerman had never really met her face to face—which had been the head and front of Mrs. Trevilian's offending. Even her name did not betray her identity. In Missouri, according to the custom of the country, she had always been called "Miss Abby"—here she was "Miss Cheever."

"I have just been admiring your picture," Miss Abby said, after the salutations and the business negotiations were over. "Is it a Copley?"

Mrs. Tigerman looked at her with sudden suspicion. She did not know the Copleys, but she would take no chances.

"No," she said shortly, "it ain't. It 's a Tigerman."

When Miss Abby learned that the Trevilian family had returned to Jackson, she wrote a letter to the Colonel.

"I want to tell you," she said, "that Virginia's piano and your father's portrait are in Lawrence. I am ashamed to tell it, for they were brought here by a United States soldier. But right is right! If you will come to Lawrence with a search-warrant, I will tell you where they may be found."

So the old Chickering came back once more to Keswick, and Grandfather Trevilian smiled down upon the third and fourth generations of them that loved him.

In one of the deep wooded ravines that turn into the Blue—a peaceful spot for such gruesome work—there was found one day at the close of the war a skeleton. The very clothes were rotted and dank, but in the breast pocket of the coat was found a paper that produced no little excitement on Grand Prairie. It was the marriage certificate of Beverly Trevilian and Lois Chandler, and was identified by the old preacher, who had returned, as the one he had written out for Beverly the night he was shot. It pointed strongly to the fact that this was his murderer.

There was no certain proof as to who the man was, but the paper was found in a torn envelop which had on it the name E-m-m-o—the rest was gone. It was believed to be Emmons Baird. In the center of the frontal bone was a bullet-hole. The avenger who had sought him for nine long years had found him at last.

CHAPTER XLVIII

HER WEDDING DAY

THEY were married, one day in October, out under the elm trees that were Keswick's glory. The sumacs had flung out their blood-red banner of defiance to the coming blasts, and every tree and shrub had on a wedding garment. The carpet on which they stood was like unto the field of the cloth of gold.

There was not room for them anywhere else. The wedding feast was spread in the school-house, which was freshly whitewashed and gay with autumn boughs.

"I ain't gwineter have no po' folks doin's," Mammy had said. "I gwineter have de stack cake, an' cook de peeg an' all—a' ole Albemarle supper!" They let her have her way, and the larder was ransacked.

It was an ideal wedding, for there was nobody there but those who loved them, and the wedding gifts were conspicuously absent. But while there was no exhibition of cut glass and burnished silver, there was over in the new nest—which was the old nest made over—that which gleamed with loving-kindness and sparkled with affection. There were buckets of lard and sacks of meal, and home-made rugs for the floors that must be bare for a while till the start was gained, and quilts that had been pieced from precious scraps and quilted for the occasion. Mr. Whalen's gift was a shote, and Mammy's the old "Dominecker" and two of his plural wives.

Nobody on Grand Prairie had anything of value to give now, but they all out of their destitution shared what

they had. And so the beautiful custom that has been so debased came back to its primitive beauty.

Only one handsome thing did they have. That was a case of beautiful spoons marked "Virginia." They came from Lawrence, but the case had on it the name of a Boston firm. With them came a note that Virginia read with the tears brimming her eyes as they did that day in the buggy. She handed it to her mother and bent over the gift.

"It is very appropriate," said Miss Nannie, grimly, "that Kansas should send silver to Missouri!"

Virginia dashed away her tears indignantly.

"Aunt Nan! you ought to be ashamed of yourself! You know he did n't have anything to do with it!"

"I know it," said Miss Nannie, coolly; "but there is poetic justice in it, notwithstanding."

But when she read the note, even she broke down. "They were for her home and Gordon's," it said, "from a lonely man whose life was deeper if not brighter for having known her, and who wished for her every joy that the love of a good man could bring to a woman."

"Virginia," said Miss Nannie, brokenly, "I think—I am—a little ashamed." That word "lonely" had touched her. "He certainly is a gentleman, if there ever was one! I *can't* see how he came to be born in Massachusetts!"

The guests were strangely assorted, as guests usually are at weddings, for then, if ever, we call the people we want. Not many of the families had come back to the old neighborhood, and not all of those who had were asked. Some whose names would have been on the list four years ago were not bidden to-day, and some were invited the very mention of whose names would have sent Miss Nannie off into hysterical laughter then. Those

were crucial years. They revealed character as well as made it

Virginia went down to Tobe Taggart's and asked Rene to come to her wedding.

The girl shook her head.

"Miss Nannie told me you wanted me," she said. She was evidently pleased that they did. "But ma she 'lowed he would n't want me to go." *He* had been in the brush. "I s'pose I 've got to think about that now."

"Yes," she continued, "it 's Hank. Him and me 's lavin' off to git married after hog-killin' time. Pa says he reckons it 'll be 'root, hog, or die.' But Hank 's done surrendered now. He says he 's goin' to work. I reckon we 'll git along.'

"I wish you d come, Rene," said Virginia, as she started to go. "We are not going to have anybody but those we love, but—you know you saved Gordon's life. We have n't forgotten that."

"Yes." The girl spoke hesitatingly. It was a strange combination of circumstances. Hank, her accepted lover, had been one of that bloodthirsty gang. "Yes, I reckon I saved him all right enough—and a dull red spread over her face—"I knew I was savin' him fur you.'

With a sudden impulse Virginia put her arms around the girl and kissed her.

"Good-by, Rene. I 'm sorry you won't come." And her tears were near to falling.

Mammy had a conspicuous place in that bridal party. One of the beauties of an unconventional affair is that you can put people according to your love for them, no consulting rules of precedence nor even of color, unless you wish. Mammy stood with the family, as was her right. She certainly had established her claim, and Virginia wished it so.

"I want her to be where she can see," she said. "They will all understand."

Nobody objected, for, as Miss Nannie said: "If anybody in the world is entitled to a high seat in this particular synagogue, it certainly is Mammy!"

She wore a bright plaid linsey,—the first she had had since the early years of the war. It was the gift of the bridegroom, who, having no "best man" or ushers to remember, bestowed his gift on the "best women," as he said, though he acknowledged that on that basis her mistress ought perhaps to draw straws with her for it. Mammy's dress rivaled the maples and the hickories for brilliancy, but it was toned down by her white apron and head-handkerchief, and by the little Beverly in spotless attire. Standing thus, she gave the last touch of color needed to complete a picture the like of which is fading now.

Mr. Singleton got back in time to marry them, and Mrs. Singleton to help dress the wedding hams. Virginia felt that she would hardly be married by anybody else. And he prayed, as she had so often heard him at family prayers, that "their feet might be delivered from falling and their eyes from tears."

Already they were beginning to build up the waste places and restore again the walls of their Jerusalem. They had nothing to begin on but undaunted faith and the Bible saved from the flames. When the jayhawkers burned the church, from some strange spasm of reverence or perhaps superstition, they took the Bible out and laid it on a stump outside the range of flame, and there it was found.

The presbytery to which Hickory Grove church belonged had met for the last time down in Lafayette County in the spring of '62,—a meeting attended by "old people, women, and children," says one who was there,

"and full of sadness, charity, and devotion—a sort of spiritual sunset before a long, dark, bitter, and cruel night of three and a half years."

Now the night was past and the day at hand, and the little band on Grand Prairie was gathering its forces to plant the blue banner again.

The willow could be seen from where they stood under the elm, but Mrs. Trevilian turned resolutely from it. Mothers' hearts are always tender at a time like this, and there must be no tears on Virginia's wedding-day. Only as the heads were bent in prayer, and nobody could see, did she look at the swaying branches. Her arms were so empty now!

Mammy filled the gap. As the prayer ended, she turned to her mistress. "Hyeah, Miss Bettie, you take dis chile. I got to go!"

Mrs. Trevilian strained him to her breast. God had filled her empty arms!

Never was there a sweeter bridal. They were very fair to look upon—these two—he in his stalwart strength and soldierly bearing, and she in her beauty. Out on the prairies the bob-whites called each other to look, and from the wood-lot back of the house came a bridal chorus from feathered throats. The sunlight filtered down through the trees and fell upon them in a golden shower. Out beyond the spread of the branches, floating clouds cast their shadows on the meadow-grass just as they used to do, but the whole world was so bright to them to-day that they did not see.

They stood with their backs to Keswick and its ruins. The smoke-stained pillars and all they stood for were behind them. Before them was the new home—the new life—and love. Age loves a retrospect, but Youth looks ever forward—and God be thanked!

And now—

The vows are said—
The potent vows that hold the happiness
Of these two souls, for weal or woe, till death
Do part.
The benediction falls,—and out
Into the world they go, one flesh instead
Of twain; and in the heart of the young bride
Is welling up the "Jubilate," tuned
To human love; and in the bridegroom's eyes
A look of tender strength and steadfastness
That says, "I will not fail thee, love,—lean hard!"

And thus, hand in hand, heart to heart, and shoulder to shoulder,—for theirs will be no rose-strewn path,—they step over the threshold of the old life into the new.

CHAPTER XLIX

EPILOGUE

THE Missouri Pacific, completed after all the war's delays from sunrise to sunset border of the great State, was bearing a train westward through old Jackson. There were many people journeying toward its ragged, unkempt metropolis in the early days of peace. Far-seeing eyes had discovered in those hills and hollows the site of the city that was to be.

A gentleman was looking from the window as the train sped on through plain and forest, the undulating prairies broken here and there by clumps of trees or threaded by willowed streams seeking the great Missouri.

"A beautiful country, sir," said the gentleman, turning to a stranger beside him who had entered the car a few minutes before,—"a marvelously beautiful country! But can you tell me what those tall monuments are that we see so frequently in pairs? They look almost like chimneys."

"Those are 'Jennison's Tombstones,' sir," his companion replied with a smile.

"'Jennison's Tombstones'? A remarkable name! What do they commemorate, may I ask?"

"The undying infamy of the man who looted this country, sir." The speaker was Dr. Gordon Lay. His appearance and the quiet intensity of his tone commanded the traveler's attention. "They are monuments to the

stupidity that sent Kansas soldiers to control the Missouri border."

The man turned toward him with interest.

"I should be glad to hear more of this," he said. "There—there is another! Do you mean to tell me that all these are the remains of houses burned during the war? I supposed you did not see much of the real thing in Missouri."

When Gordon Lay's recital was finished, the walnut trees of Independence were coming into view.

He rose. "I get off here. You go on to Kansas City, I believe."

"Yes." The stranger raised his hat courteously. "I am glad to have met you, sir. Your story has been most interesting. Good-day."

As the train started on, a man sitting in front of the traveler turned. During the conversation he had had his hat pulled down over his face.

"It won't do to believe all these old fire-eaters tell you about the war," he observed significantly. "They don't know it 's ended yet."

"That gentleman had every appearance of being reliable," the traveler said, rather coldly. He was mentally contrasting the two.

"Yes,— but they are prejudiced. Now, he has told you things calculated to injure United States soldiers—commissioned officers, some of them."

The traveler shrugged his shoulders. "But if they are true—"

"They are all prejudiced," the man insisted. "They are not reliable. I know all about it. This county was a hotbed of rebellion. There was not a measure resorted to that was not a military necessity. . . . Yes, perhaps some few things were confiscated,—arms, and such things,

—but it was a necessity of war. Soldiers have to forage, you know."

The traveler looked thoughtful.

"I suppose there are always two sides," he said. "Still—he had the appearance of telling the truth. What is your name, sir?"

"My name is Tigerman."

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